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BEING

THE BOYLE LECTURES FOR 1873,

PREACHED IN HER MAJESTY'S CHAPEL AT WHITEHALL.

BY

JAMES AUGUSTUS HESSEY, D.C.L.,

PREACHER TO THE HON. SOCIETY OF GRAY'S INN, PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON; LATE HEAD MASTER OF MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL, AND SOMETIME BAMPTON LECTURER AND GRINFIELD LECTURER IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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TO

JOHN FREDERIC BOYES, Esq., M.A.,

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IN

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF A FRIENDSHIP OF MANY YEARS,

AND OF KINDLY INTEREST

BESTOWED UPON THESE LECTURES

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PREFACE.

THIS third and concluding series of Boyle Lectures has been placed, like the two former series, at the disposal of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, at the desire of the Christian Evidence Committee.

As before, the entire responsibility, both for the particular statements and for the general line of argument which appears therein, rests with the Author and not with the Committee or the Society.

The Lectures are printed very nearly as they were preached, and have not been submitted to any editorial revision or correction.

Their object, as in previous instances, has been to remove the perplexity of persons who, with every desire to believe the teaching of Scripture, have been rendered anxious and restless by statements respecting it. These

they feel can be met and ought to be met, but they are not able themselves to meet them satisfactorily to their own minds.

It seemed to the Author that these were the very persons for whose relief the Boyle Lectureship was established, and he has accordingly had their case in view, throughout his tenure of office.

And he has remembered that they are, usually at least, persons who have become unsettled not so much by the perusal of elaborate sceptical treatises, which they have neither time nor inclination to read, but by finding, in the lighter literature of the day, sometimes sceptical hints, sometimes questions of practice apparently raised in good faith, sometimes social puzzles asserted to be fatal to Christianity, sometimes flippant allegations of contradictions said to occur in the Sacred Volume.

The Author has endeavoured to help them by causing their scarcely formulated, but deeply felt, difficulties to assume a tangible form, and by bringing such difficulties face to face with the solutions of which they appear susceptible.

He has avoided, as much as possible, con-

troversy with individual writers, though he has been compelled, for perspicuity's sake, to quote their statements. This, he trusts, he has done with fairness and without personality. He has regarded them, not as proceeding from this or that particular mind, but as having produced, either singly or in combination, certain impressions upon other minds.

The first Four Lectures of the present series relate to Difficulties connected with Prayer. In these, the Author supposes that he has before him a person, or persons, disturbed in mind by the recent controversy upon this subject. The course of that controversy has been somewhat as follows: For the last seven or eight years occasional passages depreciatory of Prayer have appeared in newspapers and magazines, and it has not been unusual, at harvest time especially, or in times of national distress, to find doubts raised as to the utility or the expediency of the supplications endorsed by the Church. These, however, were but as drops preceding a storm. Not long after the anxious time of the illness of the Prince of Wales, an incidental attack was made upon the prayerful attitude assumed by the community in reference both to that illness and

to the Prince's recovery, by Professor Beesly, in the *Fortnightly Review*. This was in July, 1872. In the same month there appeared, in the *Contemporary Review*, a paper communicated by Professor Tyndall, purporting to be written by an eminent medical man, in which a desire was expressed to ascertain the exact value of Prayer in cases of sickness. This it was proposed to effect by what has been called the "Hospital test." In the month of August, 1872, Mr. Francis Galton brought out an essay, entitled, "Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer," in the *Fortnightly Review*. These articles called forth, in August, 1872, on the other side, a paper from Dr. Littledale, which was inserted in the *Contemporary Review;* it was called "The Rationale of Prayer." In the October number of that *Review*, Professor Tyndall and his medical friend inserted a defence of their view, and an explanation of their motives in making the proposal which had emanated from them. And side by side with their communication, was one from Dr. Mc Cosh, in which he criticised and combated the statements and theory which had been jointly adduced by these gentlemen in July. Meanwhile, other periodicals had taken up the question. The *Guardian*, of September 11, 18,

and 25, had some defensive articles on "The Efficacy of Prayer;" the *Spectator* admitted into its issues for August 3, 10, 24, 31, and September 7, a correspondence, including a letter from Mr. Galton, upon the subject, of considerable interest, during the course of which appeared two masterly summaries of the controversy from the pen of the Editor. The *Spectator* closed its discussion of the subject with a review (on September 21) of Dr. Liddon's "Elements of Religion," especially of that part of it which related to Prayer. Papers were read and a discussion took place with reference to it, at the *Leeds Church Congress* in October, 1872, and in particular, a sermon was preached in Leeds Parish Church, on "Religion and Science," by the Bishop of Carlisle.

It seemed to the Author, and indeed it was pressed upon him in many quarters, that a matter of such paramount interest, as it had now passed out of the region of students and divines, required to be popularly but systematically discussed, and that a convenient opportunity for discussing it was presented to him by his position as Boyle Lecturer. A portion of it, indeed, had been treated of by Dr. Liddon, to whom he desires to express his obligations.

But that eminent apologist for Christianity, writing as he did in 1870, had not had before him the particular phase of the controversy which has been described above. And the Papers of Dr. Littledale, of Dr. Mc Cosh, of the Editor and some of the correspondents of the *Spectator*, and of the writer in the *Guardian*, the Sermon of the Bishop of Carlisle, and the Debates in the Church Congress, though replete with valuable suggestions, were so many isolated essays, which needed to be consolidated and supplemented. A man would read one essay, and be satisfied for the moment. Then an attack would meet him, and he would not exactly know where to find an answer to it. Hence there appeared to be room for the Author's Four Lectures: 1. "On the Scriptural Doctrine of Prayer." 2. "On the Intuitive or Instinctive Character of Prayer." 3. "On the Reasonableness, *à priori*, of Prayer." 4. "On the Efficacy. of Prayer." In these he has endeavoured to bring to a head, and to examine, the several objections which have been recently raised. He has done this, he hopes, without uncharitable imputation of motives. He makes no claim to originality, but has simply aimed at conveying his views upon the subject in the

clearest possible manner. And if he has not encumbered his pages with notes or references, this is because he desires it to be understood that he has availed himself without hesitation of whatever apposite arguments have fallen in his way.

An article upon "The Function of Prayer in the Economy of the Universe," by the Rev. William Knight, appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1873, and a reply to it, by the Duke of Argyll, in the February number of the same periodical. By some accident, the Author did not see these articles until he had completed his own Lectures. They were only brought under his notice by an able *resumé* of the controversy, which was published in the first Monthly Supplement of a new and promising publication called the *Day of Rest*. His first thought was to re-cast his Lectures so far as the part of his argument which would bear upon those articles was concerned. But as, after careful perusal, it seemed to him that what was objectionable in Mr. Knight's paper, and what was satisfactory in the Duke of Argyll's rejoinder, were already sufficiently covered by his remarks, he preferred to let his Lectures stand as they were originally written.

But to come to the Fifth and Sixth Lectures: These are designed to counteract the tendency of various infidel pamphlets, some of them anonymous, which have been widely circulated. But the questions of which these two Lectures treat frequently occur to minds even of a most reverential cast, and produce considerable perplexity, if an answer is not at hand. The author would recommend his readers to peruse them in connection with the Sixth Lecture of the First Series "On the *judicial* action of the Israelites in extirpating various nations, and God's righteousness in commanding such action."

The Eighth Lecture was suggested by a book, which it is not worth while to specify, but the tendency of which may be surmised from the passages quoted from it. In his Lecture, the Author has had two objects in view. The *first* is, to defend a certain document, the Speech of St. Stephen, which has been specially attacked by the impugners of the historical accuracy and logical character of the confessedly authoritative statements of inspired men. He acknowledges that the Speech has difficulties, and he cannot hope that he has met all of them in a manner which will be

satisfactory to all minds. But he hopes that he has contributed something towards their solution. He has consulted whatever works on the subject fell within his reach, and has adopted without scruple the view which seemed most satisfactory.* The *second* object of the Lecture is to show incidentally, and inferentially, that difficulties of the same kind as those which occur in the Speech of St. Stephen, may be met by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, such as is indicated in that case. It may be remarked by the way, that the Seventh and Eighth Lectures of the Second Series, "On the alleged uncandid or inaccurate manner in which passages are cited from the Older Scriptures by the Writers or Speakers in the New Testament," may be advantageously read in connection with this Lecture.

It only remains to say a few words upon the Seventh Lecture, which is in fact a sort of review of a recent work called *Joshua Davidson*. The author took up the subject with considerable hesitation and reluctance, and only after it had been strongly put before him as a duty. It was

* The Author desires to express his indebtedness to Bishop Wordsworth's and Dean Alford's comments on the Speech, and to Dean Goulbourn's *Acts of the Deacons*.

urged that the book had already obtained a wide circulation, and had reached a third edition, and that its method of undermining Christianity was sufficiently novel, and sufficiently attractive to render it doubly dangerous. And it was pointed out to him, that "to answer such new objections as may from time to time be started, to which good answers have not been made,"* is part of the prescribed function of the Boyle Lecturer. To these considerations he yielded. He has derived various hints from a very able notice of the work in the *Spectator* of March 22, 1873. And, though he must dissent from many of its positions, from a Paper by Mr. W. R. Greg, "Is a Christian life feasible in these days?" in the *Contemporary Review* for April, 1873. The Fifth Lecture of the First Series should be read in connection with this Lecture. Its subject is, "How can many of the precepts of the Bible be acquitted of the charges either of vexatious minuteness, or of unpractical vagueness?"

The Author now closes what has been to him a laborious, though pleasurable task. He has reason to believe that the First and Second Series of his Lectures have proved useful to

* *See* the terms of Mr. Boyle's Will.

many persons, and he desires to record both his thankfulness to Almighty God for such a result, and his humble hope that this Third Series may be equally useful.

Several kind friends have aided him by their counsel and encouragement in particular portions of his three years' work. He ventures to mention their names with gratitude, though he does not make them responsible for a single statement or for a single argument. They are the Rev. Dr. Currey, the Rev. Dr. Gifford, Dr. C. Brodie Sewell, the Rev. J. A. L. Airey, of Merchant Taylors' School, and his own brother, the Rev. R. F. Hessey, vicar of Basing. The friend to whom he has dedicated this concluding volume was good enough to read over, and offer his remarks upon, every one of the twenty-four Lectures either before or after they were delivered. And the Author has pleasure in tracing to the suggestive thoughtfulness and taste of John Frederic Boyes some improvements in their structure and many valuable illustrations.

LECTURE I.

PSALM lxv. 2.

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come!"

THIS is my Third Course of Lectures upon Moral Difficulties connected with the Bible. Those of which I shall have to treat this year are: Difficulties as to the Scriptural Doctrine of Prayer, which will occupy four Lectures; Difficulties as to the moral state of those whom God visits with sudden Judgments; Difficulties as to the principle upon which the God of Scripture lays down, and the method with which He administers Punishments for offences; Difficulties as to whether the precepts of Christ are not shown by experience to be impracticable; Difficulties caused by the assertion that the inspired men of Scripture exhibit, in their confessedly authoritative statements, instances of historical inaccuracy and of fallacious logic. Each of these will occupy one Lecture.

I enter upon this Course without any formal exposition of my method. For that

I must refer to the remarks which I have laid before you already. I will only repeat here, that I write for those, and there are many such, who would, if they could, believe in the Book which is said to "be able to make men wise unto salvation," not for those who would fain discredit it, because it condemns their practice. And further, that I include under the former denomination not merely those who have been perplexed by statements of difficulties raised by others, but many of those who, from their habits of thought, or from their special pursuits which have induced such habits of thought, have perplexed themselves. And even if these persons have crystallized their doubts into absolute negations, and from negations have gone on to positions on the other side, and felt themselves impelled to indoctrinate their fellows with them, I do not necessarily impute to them moral perverseness. The utmost that I should say of some of them is, that they labour under such moral perversion as is produced by an intellectual mistake. Some, of course, there are whom it would be not charity but fatuity to endeavour to excuse in this way. But there are many who are better than their systems, if systems they can be said to have. There are

many in whom I discern, or fancy I discern, if not a longing to believe, yet an inability to emancipate themselves from belief in what they disbelieve. The *Lucretius* of Tennyson is finely imagined by him as involuntarily allowing a deity whom his writings had formally denied. Thus it is, in reference to one of the subjects that I intend to bring before you on the present occasion, Prayer. The historian Sismondi has made a very remarkable admission, that Prayer is a very necessity of the soul, to which she *will* have recourse in spite of philosophy. He writes thus: "After sending my last sheet to the press, I prayed with fervency and tears. This was a very unusual thing with me, and, perhaps, was not logically consistent, for I deny any immediate action of Providence which can for one moment interrupt the course of affairs. But my heart was full, and I felt a need of Prayer."* Here, too, is a not uninstructive statement, from the *Jewish Chronicle*,† which, as it has not been contradicted, I quote to you: "A Society

* The following are Sismondi's own words: "Après avoir envoyé la dernière feuille à l'impression, j'ai prié, avec ferveur, et avec larmes, chose bien insolite pour moi, et peut-être inconséquente, car je ne crois point à une action immédiate de la Providence qui suspende jamais la causalité ; mais, mon cœur était plein, et c'était pour moi un besoin de prier."—Sismondi, *Journal et Correspondance*.

† Quoted in the *Record* of October 18, 1872.

of Atheists has been formed at Venice. They recently sent an Address to Victor Emmanuel congratulating him on the escape of his son and daughter from assassination. Oddly enough, forgetting that they were Atheists, they thanked Divine Providence for the miraculous escape." And I am told that persons who do not believe in Christianity not unfrequently permit their children to be educated in its tenets—a permission which implies a lingering surmise that, after all, it may be true, or, at least, a conviction of its social utility. M. Guizot,* in the second division of his work on Christianity, records a curious confession on the part of a parent of Voltairian sentiments, of the mischievousness of scepticism and of the benefits of religious belief. It is as follows: "I am sorry," said he, "that attacks have been made upon Christianity; I do not lament this for my own sake, for, as you know, I am a Voltairian; but I insist upon having order and peace in my domestic establishment. I congratulate my-

* The following is the extract to which I allude: "Il me parlait avec tristesse des attaques dont le Christianisme était l'objet. Ce n'est pas pour moi-même que je m'en plains, me disait il, vous savez que je suis Voltairien, mais je veux la régle et la paix dans mon ménage. Je me félicite que ma femme soit Chrétienne, j'entends que mes filles soient Chrétiennes. Ces démolisseurs ne savent ce qu'ils font. Ce n'est pas sur les églises seules, c'est sur nos maisons, et au dedans de nos maisons, que portent leurs coups."

self on my wife being a Christian. I intend my daughters to be Christians also. These destructives know not what they are doing. They fancy that their blows reach the Churches only. It is not so. They reach our dwellings, and their very innermost recesses."

> "Though Nature be expelled with proud disdain,
> The powerful goddess will return again,"

says a heathen poet.* I am aware, indeed, that those who reject the ideas of Prayer and of a God to Whom Prayer is due, deny such ideas to be congenite or innate. I shall discuss that denial hereafter. It is quite enough for my present purpose to exhibit the almost impossibility of getting rid of them, for I gather from that circumstance a hope of warming them from torpidity into life.

The terms of the first topic, to which I shall direct your attention are, stated generally, "Difficulties as to the Reconcilement of the Scriptural Doctrine of Prayer with certain *à priori* assumptions, on the one hand, and with certain *à posteriori* views, the supposed product of human experience, on the other."

* *Hor. Epist.* i. 10, 24:—

"Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret."

The rendering given above is that of Francis.

In treating of this, my procedure will be, to state

First, What appears to be the Scriptural doctrine concerning Prayer;

Secondly, The exact data from which that doctrine is gathered;

Thirdly, The contradictions, theoretical or other, which are said to militate against its admission by the human mind;

Fourthly, The considerations by which, so it seems to me, allegations depreciatory of Prayer may, for all practical purposes, be met.

A great and solemn task this,—and one which I cannot and do not commence without personal humble employment of Prayer that I may speak of Prayer aright. Even a heathen annalist thought invocations of his deities not unseemly when entering upon his history of Rome, of which he thought he could trace the visible origin; and he refers to a corresponding practice on the part of writers of fiction, many instances of which will suggest themselves to you.* Much more should the Christian apologist resort to Prayer, when he is treating of a custom which, as it appears in Scripture before

* Conf. *Liv. Pref. to Hist.*—"Cum bonis potius ominibus votisque et precationibus Deorum Dearumque, si, ut poetis, nobis quoque mos esset, libentius inciperemus, ut orsis tanti operis successus prosperos darent."

it is commanded or formulated, would seem to be of direct implantation by the Almighty.

The first and second of the four divisions of our subject will occupy us to-day.

First, then, What is the Scriptural doctrine concerning Prayer?

It is this—

Man finds himself placed in the midst of a world, the creation, sustentation, and guidance of which he cannot help attributing to a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker of himself and of all other things therein. The more he learns of that Being, the more convinced he becomes of the immensity of His operations, of His system in the arrangement of them, and of the benevolence with which He makes them converge, incidentally for the good of His creatures generally, but primarily and especially for the good of the human race, and of the individuals composing that vast and varied society. Did Man trust a part only of his nature, his intellect, he might be inclined to say, *That* power cannot be diverted,—*that* wisdom cannot be informed,—*that* goodness cannot be pointed or summoned to special exercise, by any effort on my part; or, were there nothing to counteract his doubt in cases where his intellect failed him, he might be irremediably

staggered by apparent exceptions to directing power, to directing wisdom, to directing goodness, that meet him here and there, and might be induced to cry, There is no God. But he feels, in the microcosm within, affections and impulses no less a part of himself than is his intellect, and no less attributable to his Maker's hand, than his external form, than the visible world without him, and than the invisible world and its mysterious conduct. Amongst these affections and impulses are ranged a filial love for an Almighty Father, a desire to perform that Father's will, a faith in that Father's care and providence, which directs his glance upwards in all uncertainties touching his mind, his body, or his estate, in every circumstance, great or small, of his career. And what if the action of matter upon matter seems to exclude the notion of spiritual or immaterial influences availing to change it? He looks within. His own mind can influence matter to a certain degree. And shall not the Almighty Mind? Then, as to the influence of spirit upon spirit. His own mind can set in motion a train of thought, similar to his own, in another human mind, or may be acted upon by another. His own entreaties may turn aside another from a course which seems to

be determined upon, and when he himself thinks that he has determined upon a course, the entreaties of another may and do prevail upon him to change it. And his own heart being a reflection, how faint soever, of the Divine, may he not imagine, nay, must he not be convinced of, the truth of the following position: that the love and mercifulness, and considerateness, which operate in himself, are found in their full perfection in One above him, Who may, therefore, be induced so to administer general laws as to meet particular phases in the varying wants of His creatures? True, that Great and Awful One has a reason infinitely superior to that of Man—a reason embracing fully the past, the present, and the future. True, He has a discriminating love, which encircles within its vast compass all that He has created; which cannot be charged with temporary partiality; and which may, for aught His short-sighted creatures know, energize more truly and more benevolently in withholding than in granting; or in deferring, than in granting immediately; or in substituting something else for what has been implored. Therefore, whatever is asked of Him, is to be asked in a temper of resignation—"Father, if it seem good to Thee, nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Such, and evolved by such considerations from the human mind and heart as constituted by their Divine Author, and guided by Him at and from the first, is the idea of Prayer. It is not, so far as we can trace, an idea communicated by a revelation from without. There was no time when a voice from God said to Man, Thou shalt pray to Me, and thus conveyed to him the notion of a duty which he had not imagined before. It is, in fact, an intuitive or instinctive idea. Perhaps it required re-assuring, as moral circumstances altered; or extending, as society expanded; or re-directing, when it had become perverted; or formulating, in order to check its extravagance; or subliming and purifying, as Divine Revelation was developed. But still it is an intuitive idea. And what, though the elements which I have described as entering into it, seem complex, and requiring a process of argument to combine them? I reply, This is so, in right of the inadequacy of words to express mental and moral conditions, not in right of its own character.* Grant God, and Man (God's yet unfallen creature) standing in His Presence,

* Compare Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 94:

"How hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech."

conscious of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, and of his own dependence upon Him, and Prayer is an intuitive idea. It remains intuitive when Man stands before God as a fallen creature, conscious how far he has gone from original righteousness, though it requires re-assuring under his thus altered moral circumstances. It remains intuitive, though it requires extending, when household relations expand into the parental and filial and other family ramifications, or when families expand into nations; nay, to anticipate for a moment, when a diviner bond of connection is revealed, that of the Church, which makes all men members of one Body, that is, Christ. It remains intuitive, though it requires re-directing, when Man has slighted the One true God, and addressed himself to other objects of worship, whether instead of Him or besides Him. It remains intuitive, when Man has asked amiss that he may expend what he obtains upon his lusts; though it requires formulating, as Christ formulated it, in His rehearsal of the Lord's Prayer, first to His disciples and then to a larger auditory. It remains intuitive, though, when the fulness of time was come, Christ was plainly set forth as the medium through Whom it is to be offered,

and the Holy Spirit was made known as co-operating with the human spirit in its utterance. By such revelations it is sublimed indeed and purified, but is not thereby rendered less an intuitive effort on the part of Man. These several and successive interworkings gave Prayer a larger scope, or re-assured or extended it, or re-called it from abnormal movement, or rescued it from utter perversion, or showed Man the most appropriate channel through which it should pass, and the most effectual aid by which his own effort might be sustained. They did not originate it. Man found the faculty, or tendency towards it, within him, and practised it from the beginning. It is a distinct question whether it was within him actually or potentially, that is, in full operation at once, or existing only in such sort as to be elicited and developed by the condition in which he found himself, or by the training to which he was subjected. It was there. "So," says Addison, "marble in a quarry has its inherent beauties," though "the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein that runs through the body of it."

The thanksgiving prayer which Milton has

placed in the mouth of our first parents may serve as an illustration of what I mean:

" Both turned, and under open sky adored
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heaven,
Which they beheld, the moon's resplendent globe,
And starry pole. 'Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker Omnipotent, and Thou the day,
Which we, in our appointed work employed,
Have finished, happy in our mutual help
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss
Ordained by Thee; and this delicious place
For us too large, where Thy abundance wants
Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground.
But Thou hast promised from us two a race
To fill the earth, who shall with us extol
Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake,
And when we seek, as now, Thy gift of sleep!' "
Paradise Lost. Book iv., l. 720.

This imaginary prayer is, of course, different in expression, in the exact petitions which it contains, and in its limited scope, from the prayers which we may suppose, and indeed know, to have been offered since. But it may serve as a type of all, and as a specimen of intuitive acknowledgement of Man's sense of dependence upon God, and conception of His Providential care, unembarrassed by speculative questions as to the order and government of the universe, or by any other speculations whatever.

But I now approach my Second head of discussion. What are the exact Scriptural data upon which the doctrine of Prayer, as set forth above, is founded?

The earliest occurrence in the Sacred Volume from which its existence may probably be inferred is that in which our first parents "hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." There can be little doubt that this mysterious expression implies both a communion of God with Man, and also such reciprocal communion of Man with God as enters into the notion of Prayer. For, be it observed, Adam and Eve do not seem surprised at the Presence which invited such converse, as though it were something unusual. Their feeling rather is, that from a sense of disobedience they can no longer enter upon their usual converse unreservedly. But, however this may have been, Prayer is to be inferred with absolute certainty from that narrative soon afterwards, in which Cain and Abel are represented as offering sacrifice. It has been often inquired, When was Sacrifice instituted? The safest reply seems to be, It was never formally instituted. What we read concerning it in the Mosaic ordinances is in the way rather of regulation and rectification than of institution. It is simply an embodiment of the intuitive offering, Prayer, which took that concrete form in consequence of a sense of guilt having entered into the human heart in

addition to a sense of dependence and want. Bye and bye, Sacrifice itself, and terms suggested by it, became emblems of Prayer To this effect speaks Hooker: "Is not the name of Prayer used to signify even all the service that ever we do to God? And that for no other cause, I suppose, but to shew that there is in religion no acceptable duty which devout invocation of God doth not either presuppose or infer. Prayers are those 'calves of men's lips;'* those 'most gracious and sweet odours;'† those rich presents and gifts which, being carried up to heaven,‡ do best testify our dutiful affection, and are for the purchasing of all favour at the hands of God the most undoubted means that we can use."‖ Well, Cain and Abel are found offering sacrifice. To Abel's sacrifice God has respect, but not to Cain's; though an after Prayer of the latter that his penal sentence may be mitigated, is granted, to this extent, at least, that further danger is averted. Enoch is stated to have "walked with God,"¶ an expression which surely implies Prayer. Noah offers sacrifice on quitting the ark,§ an act of deprecation of any future Deluge, as the words

* *Hosea* xiv. 2.
† *Rev.* v. 8.
‡ *Acts* x. 4.
‖ *Eccles. Polity* B.V.
¶ *Genesis* v. 8.
§ *Genesis* viii. 20.

of the Almighty and the tenor of the narrative imply. And here I may remark that the Deluge could not have been merely what is called a natural or usual flood; or, that if it were so, it was not without the Divine permission, God thus showing that He can suspend or modify natural order. This is evidenced by His promise to send no such Deluge again. But to return. Abraham, besides constructing altars to God at the various halting places of his pilgrimage, prays to God both generally and always, and specially upon matters which seemed to him to concern his domestic happiness. He prays for children by his wife, Sarah (Gen. xv. 2, 3), and when this boon is for a time withheld, he prays that Ishmael, his son by Hagar, may "live before God," and be recognised as the promised seed. (Gen. xvii. 18.) "The eldest servant of Abraham's house" has a similarly prayerful spirit, and implores a blessing on his errand to Mesopotamia, and on his master whose behests he is performing. (Gen. xxiv. 12.) And the prayerful benediction which Laban and Bethuel pronounce upon Rebekah exhibits a like spirit. (Gen. xxiv. 60.) Isaac is found entreating God on Rebekah's behalf (Gen. xxv. 21); Rachel on her own (Gen. xxx. 6); and Jacob prays at Bethel. (Gen. xxviii.

20, 21.) Contemporaneously with some, perhaps with all of these instances, we read that it was an habitual practice of the patriarch Job to offer burnt-offerings for his children, for he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." (Job i. 5.) And there is a very remarkable passage in the 42nd chapter of the Book that bears his name, verses 7—10, to which I desire to draw your attention.

"7. And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.

"8. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like My servant Job.

"9. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.

"10. And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

I call this a remarkable passage, because it strongly confirms what I am about to urge in reference to several of these instances which I have been citing. Prayer is already assuming a scope beyond and out of man's self, and both temporal and spiritual blessings are made objects of entreaty. It has glided into inter-

cession, and has embraced visible results affecting others, which it is quite beyond the personal power of the offerer to influence by material causation. And we do not discover that man is rebuked for Prayer, either absolutely, or because the particular things for which he makes his petition are predetermined. On the contrary, especially in the case of Job, God Himself sanctions the application of what was evidently an ordinary usage to a particular occasion. It is obviously a source of blessing both to him who makes it and to those who are prayed for. It is not confined to a man's own household, or to the case of his friends and acquaintances. It goes on to embrace cities and tribes, which had been enemies and are sinful. Abraham prays for Sodom and the other devoted cities, though acknowledging that, "dust and ashes" as he was, he had no claim to address his Maker—and that his Maker, the Judge of all the earth, must and would do of Himself what is right. (Gen. xviii. 23—32.) He is answered, both contingently and discriminatingly, "For ten's sake the cities shall not be destroyed," and Lot and his family are preserved. Nay, eventually, Zoar, one of the cities, is preserved for Lot's sake and at Lot's prayer. (Gen. xix.

21—29.) Again, Abimelech and his house are healed on the intercession of Abraham. God Himself thus describes Abraham, and what Abraham would do; and, inferentially, makes His own Divine action dependent upon Abraham's use of Prayer—"He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." (Gen. xx. 7.)

As time wears on, and as the corporate life of Man begins to be more fully developed, the diffusive character of Prayer becomes yet clearer. I need not, of course, enlarge upon the sacrificial system of the Mosaic dispensation, which symbolized it and implied it at every turn, and by which in fact it was exhibited in a concrete form which was constantly recalling it to the minds even of the most obtuse and sensualistic. But I may mention some remarkable instances of Prayer, pure and simple. I do not dwell on the case of Hannah, who prays for herself in her barrenness (1 Sam. i. 10), and who acknowledges the birth of Samuel to be the fruit of her prayer (1 Sam. i. 27); or of Hezekiah, who prays for his deliverance from sickness (2 Kings xx. 3); or of Jonah (Jonah ii. 1—7), who prays for himself; and of many of the Psalmists, whose supplications were eminently personal. And I only notice in passing, what I shall enlarge upon

further bye and bye, that God appears in the case of Abraham, of Job, and of Moses, to make the tone and temper of the offerers of Prayer a sort of condition of His accepting it; and that this doctrine is confirmed negatively, in Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The following are cases of intercessory Prayer. Moses is found, on several occasions, interceding for the Israelites, or for those connected with their leadership. At his prayer, the consuming fire in Taberah was quenched (Numbers xi. 2), though God's anger had been kindled at the people's murmuring; at his prayer, Miriam was healed of her leprosy (Numbers xii. 13); at his prayer, Aaron was pardoned and spared, after his sin in the matter of the Golden Calf (Deut. ix. 20); at his prayer, a remedy was devised for the plague of fiery serpents. (Numbers xxi. 7.) Samuel prays for Saul, the king of Israel (1 Sam. xv. 11), and for Israel generally. (1 Sam. vii. 5; xii. 19—23.) The Israelites are represented as asking for his prayers. He recognises Prayer for them as a grave religious duty, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. xii. 23), though, as we have said already, no special external command had

enjoined it; and his prayers are followed by results, immediate, though conditional as to their permanence on the people's good conduct. David prays for his subjects in the midst of a heaven-sent pestilence, that they may be healed, though himself, who had sinned, should be punished (2 Sam. xxiv. 17), and "Gad came that day to David" with a divine message. The dedication of the Temple by Solomon is accompanied by prayers, wondrous not merely for their sublimity and the far-seeing faith which they indicate, but for the variety of blessings, spiritual and temporal, which they include in their petitions. (1 Kings viii. 22—61.) "The man of God, who came out of Judah," is entreated by Jeroboam to pray for him that his hand might be restored. (1 Kings xiii. 6.) Even Jeroboam's apostasy and idolatry cannot obliterate from his mind the instinct of Prayer. The man prays, and the hand is restored. Abijah and the host of Judah "cry unto the Lord" for victory over Jeroboam (2 Chron. xiii. 14—18), and victory ensues. A similar result follows on the prayer of Asa for deliverance from the thousand thousand warriors and the three hundred thousand chariots of Zerah the Ethiopian. (2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12.) Jehoshaphat's

prayer, which had been preceded by a national fast and deprecation during the invasion of his territories by Ammon and Moab, is very remarkable in its terms, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." (2 Chron. xx. 12.) It reminds us of a passage in Psalm lx. 9—11, in the context of which, by the way, Moab is mentioned, "Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not Thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? And Thou, O God, which didst not go forth with our armies? Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man." Isaiah prays, as he had been entreated to do by Hezekiah (2 Kings xix. 4); Jeremiah prays (Jer. xxxii. 16); Daniel prays, and is represented as carrying out in this matter "the law of his God" (Daniel vi. 5); Ezra prays in the midst of his assembled people, with them and for them (Ezra ix. 5—15); Sherezer and Regem-melech and their men are sent by the Israelites to pray before the Lord (Zech. vii. 2); Nehemiah prays, and the matter, the manner, and the occasion of his prayer, are alike remarkable. He had heard in Shushan of the affliction of his people at Jerusalem,

and how, though they had returned to their own land, their once beautiful city was still desolate,—how its wall remained broken down, and its gates which had been burned with fire were unrestored. The prayer itself is almost unexampled for touching pathos, unless indeed we except Psalm lxxix, which takes us into the midst of the Chaldean overthrow. You will remember the strain of that Psalm:—

"1. O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

"2. The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

"3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.

"4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

"5. How long, Lord? wilt Thou be angry for ever? shall Thy jealousy burn like fire?

"6. Pour out Thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name.

"7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

"8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

"9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake.

"10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let Him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of Thy servants which is shed.

"11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee;

according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die.

"12. And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Lord.

"13. So we Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth Thy praise to all generations."

And Nehemiah's language closely resembles it, i. 4—11:

"4. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

"5. And said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments.

"6. Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

"7. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses.

"8. Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations.

"9. But if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there.

"10. Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand.

"11. O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name: and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

The mention of the 79th Psalm reminds me of the store of apposite passages which the Book of Psalms contains. These illustrate, at various periods of the Jewish history, the practice of Prayer. They are evidences of the subjective comfort which it gave the offerers; and of their belief in its objective efficacy; how multiform, indeed, how universal, were the occasions upon which it was offered; and how, in offering it, men felt that they were performing a duty as well as exercising a faculty. And it further appears from these documents that while the facts of the prescience and the providence of God are freely acknowledged, neither these facts, nor the consideration that He is good beyond the merits of His creatures, good even to the undeserving, good even though unasked, cast any scruple as to the lawfulness of petitioning in the way of the petitioner. The only obstacles to Prayer reaching the ear of the Almighty are insincerity, and determination on the part of the man offering it to continue in sin. With these exceptions, "God heareth prayer," and therefore "to Him shall or doth all flesh come;" *come* in spiritual distresses; *come* in temporal dangers; *come*, morning and evening, and at noon-day; *come*, in perils of waters, and amid the horrors of pesti-

lence; *come*, not merely in behalf of friends, but in behalf of enemies; *come*, whether poor and destitute, or wealthy, and in the world's eye, needing nothing; *come*, for the safety of Jerusalem from external assault, or for its internal order and tranquillity. Not indeed that God has need of Man's voice to inform Him of his wants,* any more than He has need of sacrifices.† But it is His pleasure to be entreated. He has implanted in Man an instinct of prayer, and an equally instinctive feeling that Prayer is according to His will. And though He reserves indeed to Himself the prerogative of granting petitions or denying them, in virtue of His supreme and all-disposing wisdom—though He exercises that wisdom, sometimes in granting an unexpected issue to Prayer, or in delaying for a time any issue at all—He encourages them by so many instances of granting at once and to the letter, as to animate men to perseverance in, or renewal of, it. And as the Psalms historically look backwards, and prophetically glance into the future, the phrase, "To Thee shall (or doth) all flesh come," implies that access to God in

* "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."—*Isaiah* lxv. 24.

† "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof."—*Psalm* l. 12.

prayer is not a privilege confined to the Israelites. It is a gift common to the whole human family. It carries us back to days before the Deluge, and to the days after that event, when "the whole earth was as yet one language and one speech." It bears us along the stream of time, when—though many in their ignorance allowed false gods to intervene between themselves and their Maker—all, in every nation, who in heart desired to worship Him, were accepted. It carries us forward to the happier era when all men shall be reunited in one body—the Body of Christ. "God," (says Hengstenberg very finely, in commenting upon our Text,) "is a living God, who heareth prayers. He is the fulness of strength and love. He is rich not only for a few but for all; all to whom the name of man belongs, come to Him, (*flesh* has the sense of weakness and need, compare Psalm lvi. 4), in order to draw from His inexhaustible fountain." And Dr. Kay translating *unto Thee* (עָדֶיךָ) by *as far as to Thee*, has intensified the gift by the paraphrase, "Infinitely glorious and holy as Thou art, Thou wilt enable our prayers *to reach Thee*."

I am tempted to hasten on at once to the statements and regulative precepts concerning

Prayer which occur in the New Testament. But I am reminded that Prayer is, in various instances in the Old Testament, and indeed in the New Testament also, the precursor of what are called miracles; that is, of events traceable to no ordinary antecedent, or to no material antecedent. It is sufficient to say, at this stage of our argument, in reference to them: first, That after all, our supposed knowledge of the connection of one thing with another, or of one event with another, is limited to observation of prior and subsequent. Secondly, That we must postulate in all cases the will and power of the Almighty to convert prior and subsequent into what we denominate cause and effect. Thirdly, That we know not all the particular conditions under which they are so converted. Fourthly, That variations were probably allowed, for two reasons: first, to direct men's minds from matter, and what are called material affinities or predispositions, to the Author and Regulator of all matter: secondly, to show, by visible instances, that a Spiritual Being—God, has ordained certain spiritual influences, Prayer especially, to be a motive power even in the hands of His creatures. These considerations will, I think, account for the chief instances in which the

Almighty has condescended to lift the veil which usually covers the working of His Providence, and to disclose His own Power as an immediate motive cause, and Man's prayer as a condition of that Power being then and there brought into operation. Had the swarms of flies simply disappeared from Egypt after a certain time, Pharaoh and his servants might have been inclined to attribute their departure to what we commonly call natural causes, to a fall in the temperature which killed them, or to a shifting of the wind which carried them off to some other region. But the fact of the Lord doing according to the entreaty of Moses was an evidence at once of the existence of God, and of His willingness and ability to vary the usual aspect of things in accordance with Man's prayer. (Exod. viii. 31.) A similar remark may be made of the restoration of the son of the widow of Zarephath. Had the child simply recovered, that event might have been attributed to what is called an unexpected turn in his disorder, or explained away as an awakening from a protracted trance, in which his vital powers had been suspended. Even his mother might have thought little of it—other cases that she had heard of had been scarcely less desperate, perhaps. But the ensuing of the

recovery upon the prayerful action of Elijah —the action being one which, so far as human observation had hitherto gone, could, in itself, have had little to do with the result—turned her thoughts into a better channel. She was thus bidden to look beneath the crust of outward things, and the ordinarily recognized priority and posteriority of events, to Him who maketh "all things work together," and who, as He cannot be bound by laws of His own devising—if indeed they be laws, and not rather our imperfect generalizations upon His acts—chooses sometimes to show that there is a virtue, also imparted by Himself, in Prayer, such as may supersede, or greatly modify their apparent action. (1 Kings, xvii. 24.)

I will only quote one other instance, which shall be of a different character from the second of the two just adduced. You will have observed that in *that* the sufferer was purely passive, and that Elijah, who was the instrument in the cure, is the person whose prayer was brought prominently into notice. But in the case I have now to bring before you, that of Hezekiah, prayer by the sufferer himself, not prayer on the part of Isaiah who was the instrument in the cure, is the point upon which our main attention is fixed.

No doubt, indeed, Isaiah also prayed. Though the fact is not in so many words recorded, we may infer that he did so, from a parallel instance. Elijah's prayer that it might not rain is not mentioned in the Old Testament. *There* it is simply said that he declared that it would not rain. That he prayed appears from the New Testament. And Isaiah being a man of prayer, we may be sure that he did not omit that without which a miracle cannot be achieved. Our Lord attributed the failure of the Apostles to cast out an evil spirit to their lack of prayer. (Matt. xvii. 21.) But to return to Hezekiah. He prayed, when a speedy termination of his life had been announced, that he might be permitted to recover. His prayer was granted; and a blessing was vouchsafed to an application by one unversed, so far as we know, in the art of healing, of a lump of figs to an imposthume which had been considered incurable. The prayer came first, then the cure by this simple remedy, and to add to the marvel, within three days the man who had been reduced to a state in which he had been supposed to be dying was able to "go up unto the House of the Lord." At his further prayer, perhaps at the moment of the application, a

supernatural sign was also vouchsafed as an earnest that his recovery should be thus speedy. All this, I think, tended to shake Man's exclusive confidence in mere material agencies, and to make him look up to that God, Who though to Man's perceptions He generally works through them, is able to work without them, and allows Himself to be acted upon, so to speak, by Man's spirit addressing itself to His own Divine Spirit. (2 Kings xx. 1—11.)

You will please to remember that I am not at present accounting for the way in which Prayer acts, except so far as I have said that it is a way which God has prepared. I am simply stating the teaching of Holy Scripture on the subject, and adducing some of the instances which Holy Scripture gives of its influence on the arrangements and disposition of events, whether usual or unusual in their combination,—or to employ the ordinary, though incorrect nomenclature, whether natural or supernatural.

We now come to the New Testament. I will not treat specially of Prayers for miraculous interference, which are, more or less, analogous to those which I have brought before you from the Old Testament. And it is scarcely necessary to do more than allude to the mass of

information which it supplies as to Prayer in general. Suffice it to say this: In the New Testament, both by precept and by example, our Lord and His Apostles are found inculcating the practice of Prayer—of prayer, for blessings of every kind, temporal as well as spiritual; of prayer, even when the case of the petitioner seems hopeless; of prayer, not for self only but for others; of prayer, for the State and its Rulers; of prayer, for the Church and its individual Members; of prayer, for very persecutors; of prayer, for converts, that they may be strengthened,—for sinners, that they may be won back to righteousness,—for the heathen, that they may be turned to God. Those who offer it for themselves, do not always expect it to be complied with in the letter, but they always believe that in some way it is, or will be, answered. Though they ask, as it seems for a time in vain, they do not faint, and will not cease, till they have wrung, as it were, an answer from the Almighty. Some answer they are sure they have, and they do not yield to disappointment. In the words of Keble:

> "God bids rejoice: they dare not mourn
> But to their home in gladness turn,
> Their home and God's, that favoured place,
> Where still He shines on Abraham's race,
> In prayers and blessings there to wait
> Like suppliants at their Monarch's gate,

> Who bent with bounty rare to aid
> The splendours of His crowning day,
> Keeps back awhile His largess, made
> More welcome for that brief delay.
> *4th Sunday after Easter.*

Those who ask for others make their petitions professing to believe that thereby they shall obtain a blessing on those others. And they implore others to offer prayers for them in return. There are instances in which a distinctly miraculous interference on the part of the Almighty is expressed, or inferentially implied; in the deliverance of St. Peter from Herod's prison (Acts xii. 3), or in that of St. Paul from the prison of Philippi (Acts xvi. 25), or in the raising up of the sick (James v. 14), and the like. Yet, even here the presence and the operation of Prayer are recognized. No thought of presumption or of contradiction to the reign of God's law or unalterable ordering of events troubles the offerers of prayer. They understand that every petition is offered in submission to God's will. Even Christ prayed earnestly that, if possible, the cup of suffering might pass from Him, but subjoined, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." St. Paul knew that many of Israel would, through their own obstinacy, fail of salvation, but this did not prevent his saying, "My heart's desire and

prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." (Rom. x. 1.) And these prayers, of which we thus read, are far from being either enjoined or practised as a mere form, or as a mere wholesome exercise of the soul which, as it begins and ends in itself, must eventually cease when it is discovered to be a sort of pious fraud; they are represented as sincere, as real, as offered up in assurance of some ulterior benefit, and so, as of objective efficacy. They are distinctly opposed to the prayers of the hypocrite, or of the formalist, or of one who would try experiments either upon his own soul or upon God.

If you ask me what I mean by this opposition, here is a vivid illustration of it from Shakspere's Richard II., Act v., Sc. 3:

"Pleads he in earnest? Look upon his face:
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are jest,
His words come from his mouth; ours from our breast:
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;
We pray with heart and soul and all beside:
His weary joints would gladly rise, I know;
Our knees shall kneel till to the ground they grow:
His prayers are all of false hypocrisy;
Ours of true zeal, and deep integrity:
Our prayers do outpray his; then let them crave
That mercy which all true prayers ought to have."

But to return. With such confirmation from Scripture of the intuitive yearnings of their hearts, men who have enjoyed acquaintance with written Revelation, have been contented to pray, since that written revelation was

vouchsafed. Before that time, both when unmistakable communications from God came to them, and when they were withheld, men were also contented to pray. Nay, everywhere, men have, in some way or other, carried out Prayer to some Superior Being—the Lord of all, and believed in its efficacy. Of late years, however, as I have intimated already, objections—many of them, no doubt, from conviction, both as to the theory and as to the practice of Prayer—have been publicly urged. And grave moral difficulties have thus been thrown in the path of those who have hitherto believed in the Bible, and would fain believe in it still. What these objections are—what the difficulties are which arise from them, and how they may both of them be met, I shall endeavour, by God's blessing, to show you in my second and further Lectures. I will only repeat at present, what has been said already, that they appear to range themselves under two main heads. Prayer is asserted to be *à priori* absurd, and *à posteriori* ineffective. At the root of these assertions, however, lies another, That Prayer is not an intuition, which is only another name for a heavenly-implanted moral and intellectual instinct, but either a mere emotional and animal instinct, or a fiction of earthly origin.

LECTURE II.

Acts xvii. 23.

"Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

My previous Lecture, you will remember, was devoted to an exposition of the Scriptural doctrine concerning Prayer. I showed, with what clearness I could, that Prayer was invariably offered without any practical misgiving as to its reasonableness, or any practical doubts as to its productiveness of results. And I argued that the desire to offer it, must, from the evidences found in Scripture, have been intuitive or instinctive; first, because no time appears to have existed when Prayer was commanded from without; secondly, because it shows itself, as it were spontaneously, in the earliest recorded actions of Man in reference to God which Scripture supplies, and reappears throughout the course of that record; thirdly, which, indeed, will account for this phenomenon, because man's idea of Prayer is one contemporaneous with, and correlative to, his idea of God as an infinitely wise, infinitely Powerful, and infinitely loving Father. The obvious inferences would seem to be, first, that Prayer

should continue to be practised by all who feel that they are in the same position in reference to God as were those of whom Holy Scripture tells us, that is, by the whole race of mankind; secondly, that misgivings or doubts upon the subject—which, if they existed at all aforetime, were resolutely stamped out, so to speak, by the faith of the offerers of it—should not be allowed to influence men now; at least, not to influence them so far, as to induce them to pretermit it.

Such, I have said, and do say, would seem to be the obvious inferences from the examination of what Scripture declares concerning Prayer and the offering of it. They have been the general inferences of mankind until quite recently, and mankind have found the voice within, which they traced to God, confirmed by this voice without, traceable also to God. I say, the *general* inferences. I cannot deny that there has been a great deal of speculative infidelity in the world which has disowned God, and all conditions and operations of the human mind and heart which lead up to Him. I cannot deny that there has been a great deal of practical infidelity in the world, which has caused men to ignore Him, and to act as if they stood in no filial relation towards Him.

But it is only recently that Prayer has been formally attacked, as absurd *à priori*, as useless *à posteriori:* the former attack being grounded upon the supposed incompatibility of its action with the maintenance of the Laws of the Universe, and upon certain other assumptions; the latter upon the impossibility of subjecting its results, like the results of any other force, to a quantitative analysis. How far these attacks are well grounded, I shall discuss hereafter. But before I notice these two main objections, I must grapple with a previous objection, which has been pressed with considerable ingenuity. And I must do so because, if it can be disposed of, the rest of my task will be comparatively easy; if it cannot be disposed of, it will render it comparatively hard.

The objection to which I allude takes two forms:

Prayer is not an intuitive or instinctive desire; or if it is, it is no more so than the impulse of a tortured, or bereaved, or deserted, or famished animal, to relieve itself by a cry of pain.

Prayer is not an intuitive or instinctive practice, but one which having owed its origin to human invention is simply perpetuated by indoctrination or imitation.

You will see at once that if this objection can be substantiated in either form, the result must be most damaging and disastrous. It may then be said, Prayer was *therefore* not intuitively suggested to man, because it was foreseen that the gratification of it would bring about an interference, on man's part and by man's action, with God's Law. Prayer, being a mere device of human invention, must be discarded so soon as it is found—as certain other human inventions have been found—by science and experience, to be incompatible in its exercise with the unimpeded march of God's Law.

On the other hand, if Prayer can be established as of Divine implantation, then, even on the old heathen maxim, (*οὐδὲν μάτην ἡ φύσις ποιεῖ,*) "Nature makes nothing in vain," it must have an appropriate place in the Divine economy from which it cannot be dislodged by either of these two main objections, especially if they can be shown to be untenable on such further considerations as I shall hope to bring forward.

I am aware, indeed, that the impugner of the intuitive character of Prayer goes on to say, "Even if the desire to pray be intuitive, the cogency of intuition is less than that of observation," or, in other words, that what he

chooses to term an induction of facts without must supersede a universal sentiment within man. On this also and on the shadow of an argument by which he endeavours to support it, I shall have something to say bye and bye.

But to our immediate point.

"Prayer," says our objector, "is not an intuitive or instinctive desire; or, if it is, it is no more so than the impulse of a tortured, or bereaved, or deserted, or famished animal, to relieve itself by a cry of pain."

One scarcely knows how to account for this statement, or to believe that it is seriously propounded. It is possible that the objector had in his mind such passages of Scripture as Psalm civ. 21, "The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God;" or Psalm cxlvii. 9, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry;" and that he intended to reduce man to a mere animal, by making their cries for aid specifically alike. But surely such passages are descriptive not of God's answer, as a moral God, to the reasonable being and to his utterances, but of His regard for the wants of His unreasoning creatures, as a God of Providence. And, accordingly, their tenor must be not dogmatic but analogical and of the *à fortiori*

character, and their effect must be, If God so regard the animals, will He not much more regard man? Besides, the argument, if argument it can be called, might be carried further, and be found to prove too much. Scripture speaks of God's care for "the grass of the field." Now, the flower drooping its head or languishing for rain or sunshine—which it may be have been withheld for a time—offers a mute appeal for help; its very appearance pleads for those gifts from the Creator of all. Its constitution bids it exhibit such wants in the manner described. And God apprehends, and, if and as it seems good to Him, answers, such mute eloquence. Man sometimes has grief too great for words, and speaks only by attitude and sorrow of countenance. But is he, therefore, to be reduced to the level of a flower, and is his prayer of exactly the same character as the indicated want of the grass of the field?

It would be possible, and indeed fair, to urge—We know, after all, so little of God's ways and of the compensative character of His Government, that it is not absurd to conceive that the ill-treatment of animals may, in some mysterious manner, be balanced, and their cries listened to. Dr. Arnold says, in

one of his letters, that "the destiny of the brute creation appeared to him a mystery which he could not contemplate without awe." And Bishop Butler admits that "we do not know what latent powers and capacities they may be endowed with." But we need not resort either to speculation or to the topic called "the ignorance of man," on the matter of this objection. The objector himself goes on, in the very next paragraph, to negative his assertion or insinuation that the animal and the human cries are specifically alike. Hear his own words: "These feelings, (those of animals,) of distress and terror are simple, and an inarticulate cry suffices to give vent to them: but the reason why man is not satisfied by uttering inarticulate cries, (though sometimes they are felt to be most appropriate,) is owing to his superior intellectual powers. His memory travels back through several interlacing paths, and dwells on various connected incidents; his emotions are complex, and so he prays at length." Now this admission is a very important one. It reduces the specifical likeness to a homogeneity, or rather to an analogy. This instinctive prayer of man is no longer merely equal to that of animals; but, as the instinctive cry of animals is to their

powers, so is the instinctive Prayer of man to his powers.

Perhaps, however, the objector may rejoin, "This was all that I intended." Well, if so, why did he not say so? Surely the whole drift of his argument is to place the two utterances upon a level. Again, hear his own words: "The impulse to pour out the feelings in sound is not peculiar to man. Any mother, that has lost her young, and wanders about moaning and looking for sympathy, possesses much which prompts men to pray in articulate words. There is a yearning of the heart, a craving for help, it knows not where, certainly from no source that it sees. Of a similar kind is the bitter cry of the hare, when the greyhound is almost upon her: she abandons hope through her own efforts, and screams,—but to whom? It is a voice convulsively sent into space, whose utterance is a physical relief." Language cannot express more clearly the objector's intention to reduce man and man's utterances, to the level of a brute and a brute's utterances respectively. "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man" (Psalm lx. 11), is as aimless and as fruitless, as "the scream of the hare sent out into space." And no ingenuity whatever can reconcile the virtual

admission to which I have just alluded that man is a creature of "large discourse,"* the brute a creature of no discourse at all, with the obvious meaning of his statement.

Milton has very happily contrasted the two orders of creatures, and recognized the tendency to Prayer which is distinctively implanted in the higher order:

"There wanted yet the master-work, the end
Of all yet done; a creature who, not prone
And brute, as other creatures, but endued
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright, with front serene,
Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven,
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Descends, thither with heart, and voice, and eyes,
Directed in devotion, to adore
And worship God Supreme, Who made him chief
Of all His works." *Paradise Lost.* Book vii. 508.

But a parenthesis was slipt into the admission above alluded to which deserves a moment's notice: "Sometimes in the case of man, inarticulate cries are felt to be most appropriate." On this I observe, They are not *felt* to be, that is, not approved by the reason, as most appropriate. They simply *are*,

* "What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused."
Shakspere, Hamlet, Act iv. Sc. 4.

occasionally, most appropriate. But when? Of course, in the matured man, when the reason is overcome, for the moment, by physical agony, and the animal prevails, the mere animal cry is his utterance. Of course, in the man unmatured, the mere animal utterance exhibits itself also. He is, in the language of Tennyson,

> "An infant crying in the night,
> An infant crying for the light,
> And with no language but a cry."
> *In Memoriam*, 53.

But to argue from an abnormal or an unmatured condition of humanity, to humanity freely energizing and fully developed, would be so illogical that we may dismiss without hesitation this parenthesis and whatever was meant to be inferred from it. In the normal man, by the confession of the objector himself, there are "intellectual powers superior to those of animals"—there is "an exercise of memory travelling back through interlacing paths"—there is "a complexity of emotions"—there is "a praying at length." In other words, there is a direction of the understanding, the heart, and the will, towards some Being with Whom the man instinctively associates the supreme disposal of his affairs, past and present, and, (for the present is passing while he is yet speaking,) his future affairs. The animal's cry

is momentary, linked with no past, projecting itself into no future. The man's prayer is connected with both these, as well as with the present. The animal does not review its sensations when the urgency has been removed. The man reflects upon the feelings which he entertained during his prayer, and reverently and affectionately connects them with Him Who has, in whatever way, and at whatever interval of time, replied to it. The animal's cry and the man's prayer are both of them instinctive, indeed—but the former is an instinctive effort, ending in itself, directed the animal knows not whither; the latter is a continuous intuition reaching forward and upward from itself and above itself to a Being called God, in Whom the man lives and moves and has his own being.

And this leads me to observe further, that there is another and a higher aspect of Prayer than that already mentioned which utterly separates it in character and in kind from the cry of an animal. It is something more than a cry of desperation; it is something more than a cry for aid to some source or helper, known or unknown; it is something more than even an expression of faith that aid will be given. It is a means of communion with God, a means

of resting on Him, as well as a method of address to Him. Such, at least, it is in its more perfect state. Now, this aspect quite escaped our objector at first. Afterwards, indeed, he virtually allows the possibility of the existence of such an aspect, though he grudgingly remarks that the reality of the communion is very questionable. "It is impossible (he says) to establish any satisfactory criterion to distinguish between what may really be borne in upon them without and what arises from within, but which, through a sham of the imagination, appears to be external." One is glad to welcome this concession, though made late and wrung reluctantly from him, but it will not obliterate the fact that he did not take this aspect into account when he depreciated Prayer in the manner against which I am contending; and, in doing so, degraded man himself to the level of "the beasts that perish."

Hitherto I have been occupied with the implied position of our objector, that to allow the desire of prayer to be an instinctive one brings it to so low a platform that the maintainers of it may well give it up as not worth contending for. But he goes further, and denies that it is an instinctive desire at all.

"It is a practice, which, having owed its origin to human invention, is simply perpetuated by indoctrination and imitation."

Let us see upon what he bases this denial.

"In civilized countries persons are taught by theologians to pray. Mothers are much at the disposal of these men; and having accepted their ruling in this and in other respects, tell loving tales to their children about God's watchful care, and join their hands together, and teach them with caressing tenderness to pray for spiritual blessings, from the very dawn of their intelligence. This nursery theology pervades the children's lives, and they mistake what it inculcates for intuition. In uncivilized countries, the missionary, by his superior intelligence, prevails over the untutored mind of the savage, induces him to accept his deity, and inoculates him with the idea of prayer which is an element foreign to his original mental and moral constitution."

All this is very well in its way,—and of part of it, that, namely, which glances upon the gentle office of the mother towards her child, one cannot help saying that it is full of tender pathos; one cannot help believing that it is more than a word-painter's sketch; one cannot help hoping that it is a memory not to be effaced.

Yes; it is pleasant thus to imagine the mother. She does her duty. It is pleasant also to conceive of the darkened mind of the savage being gradually enlightened. The missionary does his duty. Only, the mother, the missionary, and, indeed, the theologian who is assumed to have given a bias to both of these, do not exactly do what the objector imputes to them. They do not teach Prayer, but how to pray, and this is a most important distinction. In the case of the adult, those who act upon him rectify, if necessary, and where necessary, a practice already existing—the result of an intuitive desire, and formulate the expression of that intuitive desire. In the case of the child, those who are concerned with the rearing of his infancy bring out his intuitions, and cause him to recognize them as a part of his very self. And if it be asserted that they do more than this, the question may be pertinently put, Who taught the theologian himself to pray? Or, in other words, as the whole system of Prayer is more than insinuated to be one of priestcraft, Who was the first priest who invented that system? No such person can be pointed out. Even in Scripture, when our Lord, in the course of the Sermon upon the Mount, dictated the Prayer called by His name, He did so, after

alluding to Prayer as a practice already existing, though with objectionable accompaniments, among both Jews and heathen. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matt. vi. 7.) Here our Lord acknowledges the practice, and censures the faulty method of conducting it, and the accretions by which it had been overlaid and disfigured. Then He proceeds to remodel it, as to its expression, and as to the manner and spirit in which it should be conducted. He did not say, and could not have said, Ye have never heard of Prayer before; I teach you a new idea. But He says, After *this* manner pray ye, and not after *those other* manners which ye have hitherto ignorantly pursued. And so it was on the second occasion of dictating that Prayer. (Luke xi. 1.) He had been practising Prayer Himself, and therefore what He did was not to institute, but to regulate and formulate the practice. Doubtless, His disciples had noticed the appropriateness of His petitions, and the earnest-

ness with which He had offered them to His Father; and they must have contrasted Him in this respect most favourably with themselves and with their co-religionists. Therefore, "Lord, teach us to pray," could have meant no more than 'Teach us to pray in Thine own spirit, and in Thine own most full and holy words.' It may be noticed, by the way, that the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican evinces that men knew of Prayer, who had not heard of Christ. (Luke xviii. 10.) And it was shown in the First Lecture, that Prayer, or something involving it, is found to exist long before it is formulated or encouraged by special revelation. Thus much for the intuition of the Jews, and indeed of mankind generally, before they parted and became opposed under the two denominations of Judaism and Heathenism. As for the heathen of old in particular, I may quote the words of Bishop Wordsworth. If the instances which he furnishes do not attest the intuitiveness of the desire of Prayer on their part, perhaps nothing will. He writes thus concerning them: "They began nothing without prayer for Divine aid;* journeys were not

* Compare Plato, Timæus, iii. 27:

Ἀλλ', ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτό γε δὴ πάντες ὅσοι καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωφροσύνης μετέχουσιν, ἐπὶ πάσῃ ὁρμῇ και σμικρου

commenced without supplication, nor voyages without sacrifice; the opening of popular and senatorial assemblies was preceded by religious rites; colonies were not planted without inauguration; the history of some ancient cities is now almost limited to the ruins of their temples. The most sublime poem* and the most eloquent oration† of pagan antiquity commence with invocations of heavenly assistance. When was an ancient general known to set forth on a military campaign without an enquiry whether heaven was propitious to his enterprise? When were years and months begun without prayer and sacrifice? Nor was this the case only with the beginnings of actions and of times, but of places also. Thresholds of houses, gates of cities, were consecrated to the unseen powers of heaven. On the coasts and headlands of countries, temples stood visible from afar. The lofty columns on the sea-cliffs of Sunium, of Tænarus, of Carystus, and of Leucas, proclaimed far and wide that

καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος Θεὸν ἀεί που καλοῦσιν· ἡμᾶς δὲ τοὺς περὶ παντὸς λόγους ποιεῖσθαί πῃ μέλλοντας, εἰ γέγονεν, ἢ καὶ ἀγενές ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ παντάπασι παραλλάττομεν, ἀνάγκη θεούς τε καὶ θεὰς ἐπικαλουμένους, εὔχεσθαι πάντας κατὰ νοῦν ἐκείνοις μὲν μάλιστα, ἑπομένως δὲ ἡμῖν εἰπεῖν.

* The *Iliad*. † The *De Coronâ* of Demosthenes.

the land on which they stood was consecrated."* So writes Bishop Wordsworth. And as for the heathen who have continued such to a later day, I believe that not a nation has been found in which the idea of some Power external to man and superior to man does not exist—a Power to which, by a correlation of ideas, prayer is felt to be due, and Prayer is accordingly rendered. The Power may be anthropomorphically or grotesquely represented, and the homage to it may be correspondingly debased or servile and unintelligent. But an object placed before a mirror does not cease to exist as it really is because a flaw in the casting of that mirror or a fracture in its fabric produces a caricatured or multiplied image, or even if the mirror possesses both these defects. And the mirror has not thereby lost its reflecting power; it possesses it still, though in an impaired state. Of course this simile is not a perfect one, for the mirror cannot be rectified. The human heart and mind can be rectified. But it is an apt illustration, as far as it goes, of what I am about to say. The missionary has not to teach even the most barbarous to pray for the first time, but he has to do this—to rectify their moral and mental mirror; he

* *Discourses on Public Education.*—Disc. xii.

has to elevate their views of the Supreme One; to sweep away their inadequate and intermediate and broken representations of Him; to chasten and correct their imperfect, degraded, and therefore degrading, conceptions of His attributes; in a word, to guide aright their intuitive appreciations of the supernatural, and of their own attitude in reference to it. This is true even of what is, perhaps, a crucial instance, the religion latent in the Hindu Mythology. Of this, Dr. Duff, in the *Land of the Vedas* (pp. 212, *seq.*) has furnished an animated description. I will quote it. After saying that even the inferior deities of the system amount to three hundred and thirty millions, he goes on thus: "They exhibit all sorts of shape, size, and figure, in forms wholly human or half human, wholly brutal, or variously compounded, like many-headed and many-bodied centaurs, with four, ten, or a hundred, or a thousand eyes, heads, and arms. They ride through the regions of space, on all sorts of etherealized animals, elephants, buffaloes, lions, deer, sheep, and the like. They hold in their multitudinous arms all manner of offensive and defensive weapons; they discharge all possible functions. There are gods of the heavens above and of the earth below,

and of the regions under the earth. All the virtues and vices of man; all the allotments of life, beauty, jollity, and sport; the hopes and fears of youth; the felicities and infelicities of manhood; the joys and sorrows of old age; all are placed under the government of superior powers. Every scene, every element, and almost every object in nature: the bud that bursts forth in spring, the blossom of summer, and fruits of autumn, meadow and grove, fountain and stream, hill and valley; all have their guardian genii. Nay, a lump of clay, or a streak of paint, may serve as a god and attract the devotion of the wayfarer."

We may, according to our several moods, smile at or grieve over such gross specimens of superstition. But we may not refuse to admit (on the principle that all error is the perversion of some truth) that a religious sentiment lies beneath them, the religious sentiment of Prayer, which must have been instinctive and ineradicable to have generally survived the shock presented to it by absurdities so accumulated. I have said *generally*, for no doubt there are minds in which superstitious observances generate Scepticism, and even Atheism. It was so, at the Era of the first diffusion of Christianity. Through the fact that the many con-

sidered all faiths to be equally true, the few—that is the philosophers and the magistrates—were led to consider them in a much lower light, to be equally false, or equally useful. A similar conviction of the anomalies and contradictions in received beliefs, led Hector to exclaim, or rather the poet who depicts him,

Εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης.

P. Claudius, in the First Punic War, when the desired omen in the shape of the chickens taking food was not obtainable, commanded them to be thrown into the sea, with the words, If they will not eat, they shall drink. And much of the unbelief which exists under the Papal system, is fairly attributable to the excessive strain to which that system has subjected the believing faculty. Of this, however by the way. To return to the Hindus.

The missionary has not to teach these people to pray. *That*, after their manner and opportunities of worship, they do already. Like the Athenians of St. Paul's day, they are already under an amount of religious influence which only requires to be directed. He has, therefore, like that Apostle, to "declare to them Him Whom they are found ignorantly worshipping." (Acts xvii. 23.) He has not to substitute his own deity for theirs, but to show them how

much they have mistaken and caricatured the One True Deity Whom they and he have alike adored, though under different conditions. He has to point out to them that they have "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. i. 23), and to redirect and purify their aspirations. Thus he does not indoctrinate them with the idea of Prayer for the first time, but regulates the instinctive though erratically energizing idea which he finds in them. And, be it remembered, it is not Prayer in its perfection that we contend is instinctive or intuitive; it is Prayer in the germ; Prayer, as a capacity or tendency improvable to the highest extent, as the moral law which is in man is itself strengthened and improved; of it we say, much in the words of an ancient dramatist, no formal origin can be traced:

> Οὐ γάρ τι νῦνγε κἀχθὲς ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> Ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.
> *Antig.*, 456, 7.

It is not, of course, intended that the sole office of the missionary as regards Prayer is what is stated above. He has to do much more,—to set forth the mediatorial work of

Christ, and the co-operative work of the Holy Spirit in connection with it. Not that these have ever been absent in the case of any whose prayers have been accepted, but that they have not been always known to be present. These works then he has to set forth in all their breadth and fulness. Though he believes that in all creeds the One True God has been the object of Prayer, he cannot, as a Christian, employ the words, or teach as fit to be employed:

> " Father of all! in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By saint, by savage, and by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!"
> *Pope.* The Universal Prayer.

he must direct men's intuitions aright, and direct their prayers to the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity, three Persons in One God.

But of this, by the way,—and to avoid even a shadow of suspicion that those who charitably regard misbelief are indifferent to true belief, or that that they preach that Christianity is merely a re-publication of the Law of Nature.

To return to our main point.

By a curious piece of inconsistency our objector has conceded the intuitive character of Prayer, while strongly controverting it. He says that " among feelings that are intuitive are such as obedience to dreams, incantations

and witchcraft, fear of the evil eye, belief in demoniacal possession, exorcising, coercion of an angry spirit by some tom-tom ceremony, fetish-worship, and tabu." Well, there is not one of these which does not imply either Prayer or a semblance of Prayer, and appeal to some Being external to man. And this is true, however degrading the representation of Him is, or however mistaken the conception of His attributes, or however limited the theory of His power, seeing that He is presumed to have made over His punitive or vindictive functions to malevolent beings who are to be propitiated to the neglect or supersession of Himself. It may be observed in passing, that it is easy to account for the perversion of intuitions into this irregular channel. The case of Saul shows that when, in the words of Isaiah lix. 2, men's "iniquities have separated between them and their God, and when their sins have made Him hide* His face from them that He will not hear," the yearning to approach Him or something like Him still remains. "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."† Why? Because he had sinned, and was unrepentant. And what did he

* Marginal reading. † 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 6, 7.

do then? "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her." So strong was his intuitive reference to the world unseen, that he almost said in the words of Virgil:

> "Dubitem haud equidem implorare quod usquam est,
> Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo."
> *Æneid* vii. 311, 312.

And we may characterise his conduct after the epigrammatic manner of Massillon:—"Il ne croit plus en Dieu, mais il est assez crédule pour aller interroger les démons."

Our objector has, however, said something more, which I promised to notice. He can afford, he thinks, to grant, for argument's sake, the intuitive character of the belief in Prayer, and yet still dispose of the cogency of the intuition. He says, "Even if the belief in Prayer were intuitive, its cogency ought to be considered inferior to that which is prompted by the observation of facts." The one argument upon which he relies (for he expressly declines "to go into the metaphysics of the matter") is drawn from certain alleged inconsistencies of the defenders of Prayer. He pleads this:—"The very theologians who insist on the supreme authority of religious intuition are precisely the men who have already most prominently

denied it in practice. Their predecessors, at the time of the Christian Era, and for hundreds of years subsequently; nay, even men of the present time in Catholic countries (so he designates those of the Papal communion) have believed in the Divine origin of dreams and auguries, in ordeal and in duel, in lots after Prayer, in blessings and in cursings, in witchcraft, in miraculous cures, in demoniacal possessions, and in exorcisms. All these the theologians of the present English Church have quietly suppressed as of *superstitious* origin." Now I will not pause to enquire how far he is justified in his enumeration of practices thus catalogued. I will only say this: So far as these have been disused, or discountenanced, or suppressed, they have been so not as of superstitious origin, but as superstitious perversions or misapplications of that reference to the unseen, which I call, and which he also calls, the desire of Prayer. As such reference was perverted under Heathenism, so, alas! it has been perverted under Christianity. But the reference itself remains for all this; nay, by this is all the more strongly evidenced to be intuitive and ineradicable.

A remarkable admission of the very points for which I am contending, and one which

is well worth notice, appears in the later imaginings of the Positivist, Comte. I cannot better express this than in the language of Dr. Farrar* who thus describes it: "In later life Comte, feeling the unutterable yearnings of the religious sentiment, and the necessity that his philosophy should afford satisfaction to them, invented the system of religion developed in his catechism; in which, in a manner analogous to that employed by Feuerbach or St. Simon, he regarded the collective humanity as the true God, the proper object of worship and reverence; and marked out a church and a cult, the caricature of the Catholic Church, in which the world's heroes should receive canonization." Dr. Farrar says afterwards† that the Comtists, "unable to satisfy the longings of their heart by the system of Cosmism, received this extravagant idea of the worship of humanity." I need not dwell for a moment on the importance of this striking evidence to the fact that the sentiment of prayer and worship is intuitive.

Were there no other evidence available, the fact that Prayer exists to the present hour, as a general practice, after all the discourage-

* *Bampton Lectures.* Lect. vii., p. 418.
† *Bampton Lectures.* Lect. viii., p. 440.

ments which, we may freely confess, lie in its way, affords a weighty presumption that there is an intuitive desire of it. Some of these discouragements have been noticed already, as the capriciousness and futility of the petitions known to be offered, and as the debased conceptions frequently prevalent as to Him to Whom they are offered. There are other discouragements, but still men *will* pray. Men *will* pray, though prayers are alleged to be altogether absurd and irrational, *à priori*. Men *will* pray for spiritual blessings, though the results of their doing so are not immediately or always apprehended by their own souls, and though they cannot prove that results are produced upon the souls of others. Men *will* pray, though they cannot surmise how such results are brought about, even when they believe them to have been brought about. Men *will* pray for what appear to them to be temporal blessings. And they are not staggered by the thought that they may be asking for what is not really a blessing; or that others may be preferring petitions of a contrary character, which cannot easily be granted simultaneously with their own; or that Prayer can scarcely be the only consideration which moves the Deity to act in their behalf, seeing

that the prayerless as well as the prayerful are embraced by His Providence. It is quite a distinct question whether these discouragements and the difficulties which they involve can be met or removed argumentatively. I believe that they can, and our attention will be directed to them hereafter. Meanwhile, to the multitude, they are very real discouragements. And, that the practice of Prayer should have been maintained in despite of them, is a point which must be satisfactorily accounted for by any one who would wish to persuade us that the desire of Prayer is not an intuitive one.

M. Guizot shall supply my conclusion. Dr. Farrar quotes his words as "illustrative of the instinct in the soul of man to perform the act of Prayer, the natural outgoing of the human soul after the Infinite Being."

"Seul entre tous les êtres ici-bas l'homme prie. Parmi ses instincts moraux, il n'y en a point de plus naturel, de plus universel, de plus invincible que la prière. L'enfant s'y porte avec une docilité empressée. Le vieillard s'y replie comme dans un refuge contre la décadence et l'isolement. La prière monte d'elle-même sur les jeunes lèvres qui balbutient à peine le nom de Dieu, et sur les lèvres mourantes qui n'ont plus la force de le prononcer. Chez tous les peuples, célèbres ou obscurs, civilisés ou barbares, on rencontre à chaque pas des actes et des formules d'invocation. Partout où vivent des hommes, dans certaines circonstances, à certaines heures, sous l'empire de certaines impressions de l'âme, les yeux s'élèvent, les mains se joignent, les genoux fléchissent, pour implorer ou pour rendre grâces; pour adorer ou pour

apaiser. Avec transport ou avec tremblement, publiquement ou dans le secret de son cœur, c'est à la prière que l'homme s'adresse, en dernier recours, pour combler les vides de son âme ou porter les fardeaux de sa destinée; c'est dans la prière qu'il cherche, quand tout lui manque, de l'appui pour sa faiblesse, de la consolation dans ses douleurs, de l'espérance pour sa vertu."

I would fain leave this noble passage to speak for itself, but it seems to be my duty to translate it, though I shall but mar it by translation:

"Of all the beings here below man is the only being that prays. Among all the moral instincts of man, there is no one more natural, more universal, more unconquerable, than Prayer. To Prayer the child applies himself with eager teachableness. On Prayer the aged man falls back, as on a refuge against decay and solitariness. Prayer rises spontaneously,—to the young lips which can scarcely lisp the Name of God, and to the dying lips which have no longer strength to pronounce that Name. In all peoples, renowned or obscure, civilized or savage, one meets with acts and set forms of invocation. Wherever man lives, under certain circumstances, at certain hours, under the dominion of certain impressions of the soul, his eyes raise themselves, his hands seek each other, his knees bow, to petition or to give thanks, to adore or to deprecate. With joy or with fear, openly or in the secresy of his

heart, it is to Prayer that man betakes himself, in the last resort, to fill up the void of his soul, or to bear the burthens of his destiny. It is in Prayer that he seeks, when all is failing him, support for his weakness, comfort in his afflictions, encouragement for his virtue."*

* M. Guizot. *L'Église et la Société Chrétienne*, 1861, p. 22.

LECTURE III.

GENESIS xviii. 27.

"Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes."

THE intention of my Second Lecture, and, I trust, its result also, was to prove that the desire of Prayer is intuitive to Man. If it be so, there is a strong *à priori* ground for belief that the free operation of Prayer must, to say the least, be not incompatible with the general arrangements, or the will, or the other attributes, of Him Who created Man and all things beside. It can scarcely be dreamed that He, on the basis of Whose perfections, whether rightly or wrongly represented does not matter at present, the most prominent objections to Prayer have been constructed, would or could have so far contradicted Himself as to erect a monument suggestive of imperfection in the very midst of accumulated demonstrations to the contrary. And I may notice, by the way, that, on the supposition

that the Author of Man and of Nature generally is a Being of Intelligence and a Moral Being—not a mere self-acting force or energy, whatever that may mean—there is a fair ground for believing that He will hear the addresses of those of His creatures who reflect, how imperfectly soever, His own intelligence and His own freedom of will.

There are, of course, persons who assert in effect, with the well-tutored Strepsiades in the pages of the Comic Poet,

Δῖνος βασιλεύει, τὸν Δί' ἐξελήλακώς,

or, in other words, that the old-fashioned idea of a personal Deity is superseded by that of a self-acting rotatory force. But with these we have not to do at present. Grant an intelligent Creator, and a Father tender and true, He must respond to the aspirations which He has implanted in His creatures and children, and which reach upwards to those attributes of His.

There are those again, the effect of whose teaching is to imagine man to be launched into the world with a career before him, painful and mournful in itself, and to be an object, in his misery, not of providential help and sympathy, but of indifference and even contemptuous sport

to his author or authors. Such authors would be the gods of Epicurus:

"For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world.
There they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps, and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation, and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong,
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine, and oil,
Till they perish."*

But with these persons, also, we have nothing to do. An imagination of such a god, or of such gods as those, is but a flimsy veil for Atheism.

And there are others, who are graphically described by Dr. Littledale.† These regard God, Whom, as professed Theists, they allow to exist, in a very strange light. He is "a skilful mechanician, who, after constructing the universe and setting it at work, has withdrawn Himself thenceforward from all interference with it, as completely as a clockmaker does in

* Tennyson. *The Lotus Eaters.*

† *Contemp. Rev.*, August, 1872, p. 432.

the instance of a clock which he has exported to a foreign country." These are practically Atheists, not Theists, for they are "without God in *the* world," with which they are concerned. With them, also, we have nothing to do.

Our chief business, at present, is with those who, admitting a personal and moral Creator, have formed and maintain a faulty estimate of Him, of His continued relations to His material and moral creation, and especially to the latter. These persons shut their eyes to the evidences of the antiquity and universality of Prayer, and their understandings to the inferences derivable from these facts. It is nothing to them what God *is*, if the universality of the instinct of Prayer and the tendency of that instinct towards Him are to be trusted. They betake themselves to what God *must be*, measuring Him by their particular preconceptions. He must be, they say, One Who, having laid down certain laws, is irrevocably and inextricably bound by them: or One Who, having willed such and such a disposition of things, cannot consistently reverse His decision: or One Who, engaged with the affairs of the Universe, and the management of things in the mass, cannot stoop to attend

to the inconveniences or distresses which certain classes or individuals amongst His reasoning creatures may perhaps, nay undoubtedly do, experience. To address Prayer to such a Being they assert to be *à priori* absurd. Well, we will meet them on their own ground, and examine the validity of their allegation, so far as it rests on these assumptions. This task will nearly occupy us to-day. But we shall also have time to examine two other *à priori* assumptions which have been directed against Prayer. The petitions which men make, says one of them, are so various and so contradictory, that God cannot grant them all. Man is a being, says the other, the very dignity of whose character consists in his self-dependence and self-help. *That* dignity would be compromised, *that* character would be lost, were he to seek help from without.

But to grapple with these matters in detail.

It is absurd, says our objector, to address prayer to God, because, having laid down certain laws, He must be irrevocably and inextricably bound by them.

The first and most obvious answer to this is, that Man is in no adequate manner a judge as to what are laws in and to the Divine Mind. To be this, he must be able to show that he

himself is not man—a being created in time, but some other being, co-eternal with God, and participant in all the Divine designs when this "Universal Frame began."* If he cannot show this, he must fain accept a rebuke somewhat resembling those which in Holy Scripture God is represented as administering personally to Job, and by the instrumentality of Isaiah to all. "Where wast thou," God says in the former case,† "when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand," says Isaiah,‡ speaking in God's stead, "and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being His counsellor, hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of

* *Dryden.* A Song for St. Cecilia's Day.
† *Job* xxxviii. 4—6. ‡ *Isaiah* xl. 12—14.

understanding?" I do not indeed quote these passages as conclusive on the point before us, for it would be to reason in a vicious circle to defend a Scriptural doctrine, or what is assumed to be such, by Scriptural references. But they may serve to illustrate the untenableness of the judicial position taken up by our objector. The fact is, that the employment of the word Law to designate what appear to be the arrangements of God in Nature, is not strictly accurate. It is an analogical use of a word borrowed from human legislation. *There*, of course, the full scope of the enactment appears clearly. It is known to be the *one* ordinance which was at a definite point of time laid down to provide for a certain class of things to ensue. The principle laid down in it is to be applied, for the most part, unswervingly, to every particular instance contained in that class, and to be applied in what may be called the deductive manner. The necessity for it was indeed discovered inductively. Certain offences and irregularities had occurred, and it was thereupon laid down in order to promote regularity. Not so, what are termed analogically the Divine laws. These are simply classifications of phenomena which are framed by inductive observation. They are guesses at first, then they assume a greater probability.

We presume that they have been laid down by the Deity as laws, because, postulating for a moment that they are laws, they account for certain facts which would otherwise be isolated facts, on something like a principle. But the *necessity* of them was not discovered inductively, but only the *convenience* of them. We are not called upon to administer them; no action of ours can affect their primal and fundamental operation. Only, having surmised with great probability that they exist, we may generally direct our actions under the consideration that they do exist. From time to time, we discover the imperfectness of our inductions, and we modify or extend, as it may be, the scope of these laws, as new or counteracting agencies, or new and counteracting combinations present themselves. We find that we have not altogether grasped the whole of the Divine economy—that exceptional cases occur in such abundance as to supply evidence that there are "more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamt of in our philosophy."* The result is this. We are obliged to acknowledge that there must be more laws in existence than we were previously aware of: that to have confined the Creator within the limits which we

* *Shakspere*, Hamlet, Act i. Sc. 3.

fancied we had discovered would have been to measure His Mind by our own. That had we settled, once for all, His power and grasp by those limits which are now overpassed, we must now suppose Him to be dethroned, and to be subjected to some higher Deity, who has overruled Him by principles of wider range, or by regulations of more practical efficacy.

And this brings us to the second answer, which is indeed an offshoot of the first. What is called the action of the laws of nature is not the operation of animated agents, but the observed result of the collocation of certain substances, or the observed action of certain energies—the centripetal force, for instance. Any consistent theory of animated agents, as employed to account for the operation of the laws of nature, must find its climax in Pantheism. But collocation of substances implies an Arranger, and action of energies implies One who energizes. In other words, the collocation and action of which we speak have been ordered by a moving and disposing power, which is called the First Cause, or God. Does it follow, therefore, that because He has made one ordering which we have observed, and of which we think we have discovered the *rationale*, He is precluded from making any other? and can we

argue this merely because *we* have not as yet discovered any other? Why, we are every day enlarging our discoveries of His methods, or, at least, finding out that seeming irregularities are merely operations of laws already existing, brought about by considerations of which we had hitherto been ignorant. Thus we are approximating to a variety of generalizations which our forefathers never imagined. It is a very little while ago that, with all our Astronomers, we thought that we had ascertained the extreme limits of the solar system, and that it ended with the orbit of the planet Uranus. A perturbation, continually increasing, was observed in the movement of that planet. This, according to the known laws of attraction, suggested a suspicion that there was some vast body moving in its neighbourhood to which the perturbation must be attributed. It was argued: Either the laws of motion or gravitation must be wrong, at all events as applied to this particular planet, Uranus, which though not impossible, is extremely improbable; or, there must be some other planet beyond Uranus, near enough to it to cause by its attraction the irregularities in question, but not near enough to the inner planets of the system to produce any appreciable effects upon them. At length

by the aid of the telescope, the attracting body was descried, and the limits of the solar system had to be extended to embrace the orbit of a new and more distant planet, Neptune. Who shall say that they will not have to be further extended? An irregularity, which seemed almost strong enough to cast a doubt upon the exact truth of old recognized laws, especially upon that of universal gravitation, has all but established them beyond the possibility of doubt, and discovered a fresh application of them. And what if I could advance yet another step in the direction of showing that there is no *à priori* improbability that God should alter or modify, to our apprehensions, His own laws, if it seems good to Him? I think I can do this by reference to a well-known phenomenon which shows that He actually has modified, nay reversed, one of His own best defined laws to serve a particular purpose. And this purpose, even with our limited insight into the infinite adaptations of His Providence, we can perfectly understand. I mean this:—There is no law of nature (so called), more fully recognised than that water, like all other matter, expands with an increase, and contracts with a decrease of temperature. Yet, when the temperature of water is lowered to within about 4° (centigrade)

of the freezing point, this apparently universal law is reversed, and the water begins to expand, until at 0° (centigrade), it becomes solidified into ice, and so remains. We can see that the purpose served by this is, that, in obedience to another law which regulates the superposition of matter according to its specific gravity, ice may float on water. If the law of contraction had been allowed by its Divine Author to go on unmolested, ice would sink, rivers and seas would become choked up, and eventually not be rivers and seas at all, but rather embedded glaciers, with only surface liquefaction of very limited depth; in short, the whole economy and utility of liquids would be neutralized or destroyed. Thus, for sufficient reason, God suspends, or rather reverses, His own laws in this instance. And if He does so in one instance, why not in another, if He sees likewise sufficient reason? It is nothing to the point that *we* may not see or understand the reason, it is enough that *He* sees reason. That He *can* do so, we perceive and know of our own selves by the one instance here cited.

But I go even further than this. We are ourselves every day finding out methods of counteracting what we call laws of nature—or, at least, of intercepting their operations by new col-

locations, or by judicious application of forces within our disposal. Let us take some instances. Though it is a law of nature that water should flow downward, we can, by hydraulic pressure, cause it to mount upwards. Though it is a law of nature that particles of miasma or of mineral substance, if inhaled, should injuriously affect the constitutions of those who work in the midst of them, we are able to detect their existence and prevent their inhalation by some subtle gauze which they cannot penetrate, or by the operation of some disinfectant fluid. Though it is a law of nature that fire should consume a linen substance when brought into juxtaposition with it, we are able, by the admixture of certain substances with the linen, to check the action of that law. Not, indeed, that we annul a law in any of these cases, but that we intertwine other laws with it, and put conditions upon its operation. Well, if with our puny powers we are capable of thus manipulating or modifying the laws of nature, those laws remaining generally inviolate, and resuming what we call their usual action when the condition is removed, may we not allow a similar liberty to God? Ought we, as reasonable men, to imagine it impossible for Him to vary the conditions which He appears to have

imposed generally? If He cannot, He has created a power, a necessity, greater than Himself, and His own supremacy has disappeared. He is like that king of the East, who, having inadvertently issued a decree, found that, once issued, the constitution of the Medes and Persians forbade its reversal, and though he "laboured till the going down of the sun" to deliver Daniel from coming under it, could devise no means of doing so. If He cannot, He is, in fact, banished from His own world.

It would seem, then, that it is very unreasonable to circumscribe the power of God as to ordering the arrangements of nature, because we fancy we have searched out some of His laws; or, to state the matter in another way, as to varying the conditions under which those laws shall be allowed to operate. And the unreasonableness of such circumscription is the more apparent when we take into consideration that even *we* find ourselves possessed of ability to vary their conditions of operation within certain limits. It may be added that, as a child is, without explanation, utterly unable to comprehend, let us say, why a workman fixes to his mouth something which appears to prevent his breathing, and supposes that he will be stifled,

not preserved from harm,—so is it with us men—we cannot, at present, though we perceive variations in the action of God's laws, enter into the considerations which move Him from time to time to vary it. Yet we may fairly suppose these to be the needs of His creatures. As little are we able to determine that Prayer on the part of those, who by His own implantation of the instinct of it offer it to Him, may not be one of the considerations which He weighs in the balances of His wisdom.

Supposing, however, that it is not absurd to think of God as able to suspend or vary natural order, "Is it not absurd, the objector continues, to imagine that He will? You have driven me, perhaps, to admit that the Author of law may administer it as it seems good to Him and under the conditions which He chooses from time to time to adopt. But is it not ordinarily acknowledged that He foreknows and so pre-ordains everything; and, if so, how will He be induced to change anything at the petition of one of His creatures?" To this it may be replied, If God foreknows and pre-ordains all things, it must follow that the fact of men's petitioning at such and such a time, and for such and such things, and all change in the

course of circumstances, if any such change ensues thereon, must be within the compass of such foreknowledge and pre-ordination. And, if this be so, such changes are only apparent changes to us, not real changes in Him, or real variations of purpose in Him. They are but the action of laws more subtle and more mysterious, and more connected with the inner administration of the Universe, especially that moral portion of it called Man, than we are at present able to trace out. "Their appearance and their work is, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel,"* which none can see except those whose eyes are rendered specially penetrating. Few attain such power here, though it may be attained hereafter.

But the point upon which the substantial difficulty turns in this matter is not whether God's purpose is capable of change in the abstract, but whether man's destiny is so inexorably fixed that he cannot, by any addresses to God, obtain an alteration in it. He examines himself somewhat after this fashion. Have I tendencies to good—which, if I follow, I experience a sense of approbation within—if I transgress, a sense of disapprobation? Am I conscious of physical and moral liberty to

* *Ezekiel* i. 17.

take one course or the other? And having answered these questions in the affirmative, he goes on to say,—Whether I am speculatively a free agent or a necessary agent, I am practically free. I can, to a certain extent, alter my own condition, and regulate my own movements, and adjust myself to circumstances, and circumstances to myself. I feel an intuitive or instinctive desire of Prayer to God to help me further. I cannot suppose that He implanted this desire in me aimlessly. I cannot, at any rate, suppose it to be a contradiction to His will if I prefer requests, subordinating always the granting of them to His decision, with "nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt."* Do I arraign His wisdom or His consistency thereby? Nay rather I humbly acknowledge them; and, so far as in me lies, I establish them. I could not reasonably do otherwise. In the language of Bishop Butler, "Did I pretend to act upon reason, in opposition to practical principles, which the Author of my Nature has given me to act upon; did I pretend to apply my reason to subjects, with regard to which my own short views, and even my experience, will show me

* Compare Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, introductory stanzas:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

it cannot be depended upon; . . . . this is vanity, conceit, and unreasonableness."

But the objector returns once more to the charge, "God is a great legislator. As a rule, legislators take a broad and general estimate of the wants and interests of the mass. They cannot listen to complaints suggested by the hardships of individuals. To do so, would be to introduce complexity, and indeed confusion, into their arrangements, and to defeat the very design with which those arrangements have been made. It would be absurd to ask them to make exceptions or exemptions. It is much more absurd to prefer requests of such a character to the Legislator for the Universe."

This objection appears to be a somewhat plausible one, but a very little consideration will show that it is scarcely to the purpose, as an argument against God's admissibility of Prayer on the part of His creatures. Were a politician defending a particular proposal, which he desired to pass into a law, from the imputation that it would leave, after all his care in drawing it up, some present wrongs unredressed, or even create cases of hardship, it would be fair enough for him to speak as follows: "Show me the legislator who has been able to avoid

such difficulties. It is impossible to lay down a restrictive law which cannot be evaded, or a permissive law which cannot be abused, to the injury of their fellows, by the evaders of the one, and by those availing themselves of the other, respectively. And it can scarcely be, that the restrictions intended for the dishonest will not sometimes press hardly upon the honest; or that permissions accorded will not be inapplicable to many who ought to be able to enjoy them. This is a defect inherent in human affairs. It is not one which detracts from the merit of my present proposal. Something may be effected by vigilant and equitable administration. There are courts of equity, to provide for the protection of rights in the cases of certain persons which are not recognized by the law, for the prevention of injuries which the law can only punish, for the adjustment of claims of persons interested in different ways in the apportionment of a common fund, and the like. Something, again, may be effected by explanatory and supplemental enactments, when petitioners shall have established the existence of anything like a general wrong. But, I regret to admit it, many individual grievances must exist which cannot be heard or, if heard, attended to."

Such, I say, might fairly be the plea of a human legislator, arguing from all precedents in human legislation, to his own proposal. But how does it apply to the Almighty? Can we suppose otherwise than thus of Him, that in His foresight He has provided for every possible case, by laws of the most subtle and intricate ramifications? And can we separate, even in imagination, His administration from His legislation? Must we not believe Him to be cognizant of every apparent violation of His law, every apparent hardship or want of His creatures, every single petition uttered or unuttered which they make to Him for redress? Is He not a Being of infinite loving-kindness and consideration; not hard and stern, as, from the very difficulty of their position, human legislators and human administrators are compelled to be? And, as by the very instincts of our nature, we are directed from the present to the future, in which all things shall be cleared up, all apparent anomalies rectified, and all apparent failure of justice compensated for, may we not believe that He allows us to ask, and does or will, if we ask aright, grant our petitions, though we know not how or when? To think thus of Him is not inconsistent with the idea

that He is a great legislator—but it gives a transcendental meaning to the title of legislator, instead of limiting its applicability to men who, with the best intentions, perhaps, very ineffectually imitate Him.

And, be it observed, this particular administration on the part of God involves no contradiction to His legislation. It is in fact a part of it. It is the bringing down the provisions of His law to the wants of the smallest aggregate of His creatures—to the two or three, or even to the individual creature. It is strictly analogous to His creative work being compatible with His work as a sustainer of His creation. The latter of these is part of the former. To sustain, to uphold in existence, is a continuation of creative power. "Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created," is supplemented by "That Thou givest them, they gather—Thou openest Thy hand, and they are filled with good." When this sustaining power ceases, the end comes, "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."* He Who made the light and the water, makes also the prismatic colours which result from their combination. He Who gives the

* *Psalm* civ. 30, 28, 29.

waves of the sea a boundary which they cannot overpass without His permission, no doubt permits that particular land to be submerged, and that to be enlarged by their retirement; nay, even that heap of sand to be washed away, or that rock to remain unscathed, by their fury. Much more, in the case of Man, we may believe that God's legislation is shaded off into the most delicate administration of His Providence; and that the faintest and weakest aspirations of man's heart are known to God before, are heard at the moment, and will, if it is good for him, and when it is good for him, be answered.

And be it observed also that, by this explanation and extension of God's legislative function, Man is correlatively relieved from any fear that, in praying, he may be asking for what is called a *privilegium*. For a *privilegium* is of two kinds—a special law against an individual, or a special law in favour of an individual. Petition for neither of these kinds is necessarily involved in Prayer. A man prays for deliverance from a particular foe—but this does not imply a wish that God will step out of His way to enact or execute a law against that foe. A man prays for a particular blessing—but this does not imply a wish that God will

in his case enact an ordinance applicable to him, and to his personal want only. The theory of his petition in both cases is simply this:—If it be possible—if, that is, it be consistent with Thy Divine arrangement, if it seem good in Thy sight, and good for me, grant me this blessing or this deliverance; nevertheless, O, Father, not as I will but as Thou wilt!

So it is too with intercession. A man prays, perhaps, as Abraham did, that a threatened catastrophe may be averted or mitigated. It does not matter for our purpose whether the threat is conveyed by ordinary or by extraordinary intimations. Whether a storm is simply seen gathering in the sky, or whether God has, in some unusual manner, explained the intention of the storm—man may, without unduly exalting his prevailing power with God, nay, while humbly acknowledging that "the Judge of all the earth must do right," and that he himself is in comparison to Him "dust and ashes," prefer a hope that judgment may be stayed. The theory of his hope is, that, by some balance in the Divine arrangements, some interworking or over-lapping of one Divine ordinance with another, it may be morally possible to spare. "There may be," this virtually underlay the prayer of Abraham, "how I

know not, God knoweth, there may be a law by which even a wicked multitude can be spared for the righteousness of a few. If there be, I feel that God will allow me to plead it. If there be not, He will graciously pardon His servant's ignorance now, and enlighten it hereafter." In reference to these last words, I may quote the Parable of Dives and Lazarus. A feature is found in it which surely is not altogether a parable, but rather a conveyance of the truth that God's administrative legislation will be cleared up bye and bye. That very Abraham, who, whilst on earth, pleaded earnestly for the sinners who dwelt in the Cities of the Plain, has no will to help Dives, or to warn his brethren yet alive on the earth. In his glorified state, he sees God's dealings as they are; before, he saw them through a glass darkly. But of this, rather by way of illustration than of direct argument.

Here, however, I must digress for a moment, lest what is really a defence of the theory of Prayer, be mistaken for an account of its practical character. When, then, I speak of the possibility that Prayer may be one of the considerations or conditions upon which God varies the fortunes of men, I do not mean to imply that, while a man is praying, the thought that

it is such is present to him. When I speak of the foreknowledge of God and His pre-ordination of things, and postulate the admission, that Prayer and its results are known to Him long before, I do not conceive that, while a man is praying, he thinks of this. And when I speak of the legislation of God, I quite as little suppose the praying man to be setting before himself, consciously at least, the theory of a Mighty Being, the originator of the world and of its laws. These may be afterthoughts, arguments by which he may silence his own doubts, or the doubts of others, if pressed upon him in controversy. They are not present with him at the time of his offering his supplication. If they were, he would be saying to God, "Here is Thy condition, concede that of which it is the condition;" or, "Here is the antecedent, Thou art bound to bring on the consequent;" or, "Here is Thy law, exhibit the application of it." Prayer is not a reasoning or a stipulation with God, but a palmary method of communion with God. It is an act of intercourse, on the part of a loving, trustful, needing spirit, with a benevolent, sympathizing, freely-giving Divine Spirit. Of this I shall say more in my Fourth Lecture; but I cannot help quoting some noble words of Mr.

R. H. Hutton,* which explain what I mean more thoroughly than I can explain it myself. He writes thus: "If communion with God be not the free interchange of a living trust for a living love; if it be not a voluntary appeal, looking for a voluntary reply; if the imploring agony be a mere flash of vital force, pre-ordained to precede a fixed proportion of the Divine blessing; if, in short, individual prayers do not individually affect the Divine Spirit, except as determinate signals in a mighty plan, upon the appearance of which an act of love becomes due—then, I say, with such a conviction stamped upon the mind, it would be totally impossible to pray. Prayer can never be the fulfilment of a 'pre-ordained condition,' the 'payment of a peppercorn rent,' without utterly ceasing to be Prayer. It is, and only can be, possible on the assumption that it is a real influence with God; that, whether granted or denied, it is *efficient*, as an expression of our spiritual want and resolution; that the breath of power which answers it is a living response, and, like all living responses, the free utterance of the moment, not the pre-ordained consequent waiting for a pre-ordained antecedent; that there is a sphere beyond all necessary law, in

* *Essays*, Vol. I. pp. 367, 8. *On the Hard Church.*

which both the Divine and human life are not constrained by immutable arrangements, but free."

But, to return to my main purpose, the position of God to man as a legislator and as an administrator of His own laws.

"Granting," says the objector, "that in virtue of the minuteness of His legislation, and of the perfectness of administration which His omniscience and omnipresence suggest, God can hear and grant the prayers of individuals, I still see a serious practical difficulty. Like many suitors applying for one situation, several persons may be simultaneously asking for the same thing; or, in a war between two nations, each nation may, with a full conviction of the righteousness of its cause, be asking for a blessing; or, in the case of weather in the same district of country, there are two sorts of crops, one of them requiring rain, the other a dry season, and the producers may be varying their prayers accordingly; or, in the case of ecclesiastical appointments, the believers of different theological schools may be praying that the hearts of those who appoint may be guided according to the bias of their particular prepossessions. Well, how is the Disposer of events to satisfy all these persons? Do what

He will, He must disappoint at least one, and probably many. Those who have been disappointed will naturally repine and say, 'All our prayers have come to nothing; we will not pray again.' Even he who has obtained his desire will be inclined to say, 'I prayed, to be sure, and I have been successful, but *post hoc* does not involve *propter hoc*, as the ill success of my competitors demonstrates; most likely not God, but chance, or my own efforts, decided the matter; I will not pray again.' Thus the old saying of the French cynic, after granting a favour, comes true, 'J' ai fait dix mécontents et un ungrat.' And the absurdity of Prayer becomes overwhelmingly apparent."

We are again constrained to reply: The analogy of human petitions has sadly misled our objector. True Prayer is not of the same moral character as earthly candidature. It is conditional so far as the Grantor is concerned: "If it seem good to Thee;" it is conditional, so far as the applicant is concerned, "If it is really good for me;" it is long-suffering and patient, "I will wait God's time;" it is diffident, "I may be mistaken as to what is good for me;" it is full of resignation, "Not my will but Thy will be done;" it is humble, "After all is my supposed private interest to be

preferred to that of many?" it is self-searching. "Perhaps my sins have caused God to deny my request." And it says, finally, "Though my requests for temporal blessings, or such as have appeared to me to be such, have not been granted, I will still betake myself to Prayer. I will pray for a fuller appreciation of God's love than I now have, and a more thorough conviction of my own ignorance. I will pray for greater patience and resignation, more humility, more consideration for my fellows, and a deeper sense of my personal unworthiness to receive anything at God's hands, than I now possess. In thus praying, I cannot clash, either with the designs of my God, or with the interests of my brethren. Spiritual blessings He can grant to the very extent of my wish, nay beyond my wish, without stint or hindrance, and without diminishing the degree in which they are accorded to others.* As for temporal blessings, I will continue to pray for them as before; they will be given to me if they are good for me;

* Archbishop Trench has said, much to the same purpose, "The fountain of God's grace is not as a little scanty spring in the desert, round which thirsty travellers need to strive and struggle, muddying the waters with their feet, pushing one another away, lest those waters be drawn dry by others before they come to partake of them themselves, but a mighty inexhaustible river, on the banks of which all may stand, and of which none need grudge lest, if others drink largely and freely, there will not enough remain for

if they are not good I shall still have obtained a greater good, a feeling and a fact that God has given me something better—faith, resignation, humility, brotherly love, obedience, and conviction of His wisdom."

We come, then, to this, that the absurdity of Prayer *à priori*, on the ground that God cannot grant conflicting requests, is decidedly removed by exhibition of the imperfectness of the analogy from which the allegation of that absurdity was drawn. Prayer does not, if rightly offered, necessarily look for a direct answer, though it always looks for, and, being an intuitive or instinctive offering, is justified in looking for, some answer. Examples are not wanting which show that this is so. Nations have prayed for a blessing on their arms or on their commercial designs. God has given victory to their enemies, or allowed their commerce to be diverted from them by other enterprizing peoples who have used similar prayers for themselves. But, because, materially speaking, both sides could not obtain the

themselves. To each of His true servants and children the Lord says, as the father in the parable did to his elder son, '*All that I have is thine;*' if any then is straitened and counts that he has not enough, he is straitened, as is the elder son here, not in God, but in himself, in his own narrow and grudging heart."—*On the Prodigal Son.*

same answer, does it follow that only one side has had an answer? Not so, surely, if the other side has learned by denial greater distrust of self, earnest zeal in seeking out sins or errors which may have deserved miscarriage, readiness to amend them, and, for the future, more dependence upon God. Or again, a parent has prayed that his child may be raised up from sickness. That Prayer has not been granted in the letter. It has been apparently denied. "The desire of his eyes has been taken away from him with a stroke." * But his Prayer has not been unanswered, if the withdrawal of an earthly idol has caused him to turn his glance more immediately and undistractedly towards his God. Bishop Jeremy Taylor has said very beautifully, and very truly: "We pray for health, and God gives us, it may be, a sickness that carries us into eternal life. We beg a removal of a present sadness, and He gives us that which makes us able to bear twenty sadnesses—a cheerful spirit, a peaceful conscience, and a joy in God, as an antepast of eternal rejoicings in the kingdom of God." And again, "God will no longer deny him," (the man of true prayer), "anything, but when it is no blessing; and when it is otherwise his prayer

* *Ezekiel* xxiv. 16.

is most heard when it is most denied." And again, "The event must be left with God, and the secret reasons of the denial either thou shalt find in time or thou mayest trust with God."*

"But, for all this," says the objector once more, "seeing that the issue of Prayer is practically so uncertain, is it not *à priori* absurd that a man of action and self-reliant temperament should resort to it?"

There are several answers to this.

In the first place, if it is only slightly probable that Prayer is one of the means by which human designs may be furthered, it is not absurd, but prudent, and a mark of readiness and sagacity for an energetic man to make use of it. As Bishop Butler† well remarks, "Numberless instances might be mentioned respecting the common pursuits of life, where a man would be thought, in a literal sense, distracted, who would not act, and with great application too, not only upon an even chance, but upon much less, and where the probability or chance was greatly against his succeeding."‡

* *Sermons on the Return of Prayer.*

† Introduction to *Analogy.*

‡ The prudential argument, as founded on the probable or possible, is frequently objected to as very low ground, in the present day; but I am content to use it, with Bishop Butler and with Pascal, in its proper place. It will be observed, however, that I scarcely rest a moment on it.

Secondly, if Prayer be of highly probable utility, that is, if the universal belief of mankind—an evidence of universal instinct—is in its favour as an auxiliary instrument of action, it would be much more the true policy of the energetic man to make use of it.

Thirdly, the self-reliant character of the man is not impaired by the fact that he avails himself of Prayer, although he does not exactly see how it operates. For on that theory he would be bound to reject the assistance and good wishes of his friends, and many favouring circumstances and opportunities which he did not create for himself, and the operation of which is to a great extent not under his cognizance or direction.

Fourthly, the use of Prayer cannot be said to clash with self-reliance on the plea that it is not a bringing out part of oneself into energy. For, as has been shown already, Prayer is an instinct, *i.e.*, is a part of self brought into energy; it is not a mere passive reception of impressions from without, or a hazy and lazy looking up to heaven for aid, as some persons have loved to picture it. Why should it then not be exercised as well as other faculties of man's nature—his ingenuity, his combinative power, his rapid apprehension, his inventiveness, his activity, and the like?

Fifthly, the supposed incompatibility of Prayer with self-reliance is a good deal grounded on the belief that Prayer is to be used alone. Of course, there have been fanatics—there are some in our own day—who lay this down in certain matters, who will not, for instance, employ a physician in a child's sickness, lest they should be supposed to be trusting in other help than in God's answer to Prayer. They might be asked, very pertinently, whether they carry out this principle in reference to seeking for food and raiment for themselves: whether Prayer is the only means to which they resort for daily bread. But it would be ridiculous to found an argument against Prayer on such a delusion. The truer maxim is "*Ora et labora*"—Pray, that your labour may be blessed; labour, lest your very Prayer be an excuse for inactivity. If you value Prayer do not let it be brought into disrepute by your sluggishness. No promise is given to those who neglect ordinary means. If you will not vaccinate your child, if you will not drain and ventilate your dwelling, if you will not attach lightning-conductors to the tall chimneys of your factory, if you will not lay up provision for your old age, what will be the result? The unpraying, who in these practical matters have

been, in their generation, wiser than yourself, will appear to be and indeed are more temporally prosperous than you who profess to have prayed. Not merely will your misfortunes obtain little sympathy, but Prayer, through your abuse of it, will incur contempt. Remember those weighty, though quaint, words of Dr. Donne:—

> "Hands are of double office; for the ground
> We till with them, and them to Heaven we raise:
> Who prayerless labours, or without this prays,
> Doth but one half, that's none."

Again, I say, "*Ora et labora.*" This is, at any rate, a good general rule. There may be cases where labour ordinarily so-called is ineffectual. A ship is foundering, the boats have been dashed in pieces, the pumps are powerless, and no friendly vessel is nigh. Then prayer and labour are synonymous. The sinking crew can only pray for resignation and preparedness for their end. A child is at the point of death, all remedies have been tried, we will believe, tried prayerfully, in vain. Then, too, prayer and labour become most clearly synonymous. Nought can be carried on but prayer that God will receive the departing soul, and comfort and sustain the bereaved survivors. And the following fact has been frequently noticed as a proof that Prayer is a labour, is a bringing out of latent power into energy, is a means to some result: the most

self-reliant persons, as they are called, in life, have bethought themselves of a hitherto unexercised part of self, in their dying hour. To this effect spoke Wolsey:—

> "O, Cromwell, Cromwell,
> Had I but served my God with half the zeal
> I served my king, He would not in mine age
> Have left me naked to mine enemies."
> *Shakspere*, Henry VIII., Act iii. Sc. 2.

Now, what is this but an acknowledgment that Prayer had not been duly used hitherto?

I have done my best to show you that there is little if any weight in the *à priori* assumptions of objectors to Prayer. I would that I could close my treatment of the subject at this point. But the cant of the day talks much of "the stern logie of facts," and of the impossibility of believing any power which cannot be tested by an induction of palpable results. Prayer is said to be unable to endure such a test. Results are declared to be so decidedly against its existence as an appreciable motive factor in human affairs, that it must be rejected as a vain imagination. And it is thus implied that, whatever becomes of the *à priori* objections to it, whether they are valid or no, the objections to it *à posteriori* are insurmountable.

We shall see how these matters stand, in the Fourth Lecture.

LECTURE IV.

MARK viii. 11, 12.

"And the Pharisees came forth and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him.

"And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, 'Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, there shall no sign be given to this generation.'"

THE chief *à priori* objections to the employment of Prayer were disposed of, I hope, sufficiently for the purpose, in my Third Lecture. If any such objection still remains over, it is this: How can a *spiritual* agency be effective towards producing *material* changes? It is urged, and with some plausibility, that many of the things prayed for, alteration of the weather, for instance, are material in their character, and are not brought about without some displacement in Nature. Now, as an ordinary rule, such displacement is caused by matter acting upon matter. Unless, therefore, it can be shown that Prayer has an exceptional motive power, its sphere of action must be limited to bringing about spiritual blessings. And, as spiritual blessings are out of sight, and cannot be attested by any evidence except

that of the person who professes to experience them, it is more than probable that Prayer, driven, as one conceives it must be driven, from one sphere of action, and incapable of having its action in that other sphere substantiated by any valid evidence, is a fiction altogether. It is not that the possibility or the existence of *invisible* agencies is for a moment disputed. Those who object to Prayer are much too shrewd to expose themselves to the retort by which an unlettered sailor silenced a certain female lecturer on infidelity, when she declared she would believe in the existence of nothing that she could not see: What do you think of the wind, madam? They believe in atmospheric currents, they believe in invisible gases—but they question the existence of *spiritual* action, properly so designated.

It is not very difficult, I think, to rend in pieces this last rag of the mingled tissue of *à priori* objections.

In the first place, unless we conceive the Deity to be Himself material, we cannot, after having ascended from one material cause to another until we arrive, as we must eventually arrive, at the Deity, deny that the operation of the Great First Cause is that of a spiritual agency upon what is material. Even the

heathen saw this, as their phrase, *Mens agitat molem*, abundantly indicates.

In the second place, wherever the will of Man is brought into play, whether he operates on willless things about him, or causes the wills of his fellows to mould their actions in accordance with his will, a case of spiritual agency is established.

In the third place, whether Prayer is directed towards the attainment of physical blessings or of spiritual blessings, it is quite needless to assume that Prayer is the *cause* of their production. It is much safer to consider Prayer to be a *condition* of the mind and heart and will, and a *direction* of the mind and heart and will to the Great Controller of the laws of events, to which Man instinctively inclines. If that Controller does not, for whatever reason, assent to their production, the events desired will not be produced.

And fourthly, whatever difficulty exists in tracing the operation of Prayer towards the production of physical events, that same difficulty exists in tracing its operation towards the production of spiritual events.* We pray;

* "It is not necessary for devotion, perhaps not very consistent with it, that the circuit of causes by which prayers prevail should be known by the petitioner, much less that they should be present to his imagination at the time. All that is necessary is that there be no impossibility apprehended in the matter."—*Paley's Moral Philosophy.*

the wind changes—we cannot tell why or how. We pray; a change comes over our hearts and feelings—we are equally unable to tell why or how. With great deference, therefore, to our objector, we must decline to limit the sphere of the action of Prayer to spiritual blessings; and the more so, because we cannot help surmising that his concession of even this reduced province for Prayer is only a temporary one; and that, if we consented to such a restriction, his next step would be to throw doubts upon its having any real action at all. Not, indeed, that this would be stated in so many words, but it would be said, "By acceptance of the restricted province, you have made the efficacy of Prayer so purely subjective, that no one except the person offering it can tell whether it has any efficacy at all. I will not quarrel with that person for thinking that it has. Be it so, if he will have it. It may be a wholesome persuasion for himself. It can do no harm to his neighbours to be prayed for by him, and there is no particular reason why he should not be allowed to hold his theory."

I shall have occasion hereafter to say something about the subjective efficacy of Prayer, and will waive further treatment of it for the present. Meanwhile, however, it is a curious fact that

coincidently with a disposition to undervalue Prayer on the ground that it is a spiritual agency, there has arisen a disposition to support the pretensions of what is called *Spiritualism*. The essence of Spiritualism is that it recognizes a power of action by the will, upon will and upon matter, independently, and even in defiance, of what are supposed to be the ordinary laws of influence. Weights can be raised without the action of the force usually employed; wills can be swayed without the ordinary methods of persuasion. What sort of spirit, morally and intellectually considered, that spirit is which thus acts in accordance with, or in obedience to, or in furtherance of, the efforts of the human spirit in bringing about the alleged effects, does not appear. And the alleged effects are so trivial, so little tending to any human good, and so confessedly incompetent to alleviate any human anxiety, that they may safely be set aside. If not mere feats of legerdemain on the part of the agents, they are something like nervous delusions on the part of the patients. But the popularity, or, at least, the notoriety, which Spiritualism has achieved would never, I think, have been achieved but for two reasons:—

First, because it is an illegitimate way in which belief in the possibility of spiritual agency, when

dammed out from its proper channel, belief in the efficacy of Prayer, exhibits itself.

Secondly, because it seems to offer a solution of the question, Can spiritual agency be tested by visible results? "A ponderous table is moved, a will is enthralled by will," say the Spiritualists, "therefore our system has a good foundation." Upon this the advocates for the possible action and efficacy of Prayer say, "We dispute your facts, we distrust your impressions; perhaps we go further than this in what we say of you and of them: we disapprove of these experiments—for such they are—upon the world out of sight. But, for all this, we gather from what we call your hallucinations an admission that spiritual agency is not *à priori* improbable."*

I have, however, noticed this subject because it introduces us not unnaturally to a class of objections to prayer which has been hitherto

* The following passage, which refers to the period immediately preceding the Great French Revolution, presents a remarkable parallel to the argument in the text. It is taken from *Mémoires ou Souvenirs et Anecdotes*, par M. Le Comte de Ségur: "Telle était la singularité de ce siècle qu'au moment où l'incrédulité était en vogue, où l'on regardait presque tous les liens comme des chaînes, où la philosophie traitait de préjugés toutes les anciennes coutumes, une grande partie de ces jeunes et nouveaux sages s'engouait les uns de la manie des illuminés des doctrines de Swedenbourg, de St. Martin, de la communication possible entre les hommes et les esprits célestes, tandis que

merely alluded to, I mean, that of *à posteriori* objections.

Those who hold them say, "If Prayer is an appreciable motive factor in human affairs, it must be capable of being tested by results. Employ methods of testing it analogous to those which are employed in other matters, and let these tests show that it is a principle, either efficient by itself or a co-efficient in any degree, and a great obstacle to our full belief in it will be removed. We take up our position, remember, not as disbelievers in the value of Prayer, but as modest inquirers into the amount of its value. And if this can only be ascertained, we think that, as having suggested the inquiry, we shall deserve credit and obtain thanks. We shall have reduced what is a mere guess to a certainty,—furnished to men in general an aid which they are not aware of,—and strengthened in religious men the belief which they already hold. For ourselves we do not prejudge the question. We only 'ask for a sign.'"

beaucoup d'autres, s'empressant autour du baquet de Mesmer, croyant à l'efficacité universelle du magnétisme, étaient persuadés de l'infaillibilité des oracles du somnambulisme, et ne se doutaient pas des rapports qui existaient entre ce baquet magique dont ils étaient enthousiastes, et le tombeau miraculeux de Paris, dont ils s'étaient tant moqués." The concluding words relate to the alleged miracles at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, mentioned by Paley in his *Evidences*.

This moderate language upon the subject is not indeed held universally on the opposing side. There are those who say, "We *have* looked for a sign already, and have found none. We have taken the utmost pains to determine who are the persons most frequently prayed for, and for what sort of blessings in their favour prayers have been offered. And what is the result? It does not appear that kings live longer, or are wiser or better than other men—that the nobility, or the clergy, or the Parliament are perceptibly benefited in the points to which the Prayers for them refer. Missionaries to the heathen, for whom most devout and special intercessions are offered, are as subject to miscarriage in their voyages, and to fatal diseases or accidents in the midst of their work, as other men are. Neither their own Prayers nor those of others preserve these men from the miasma of the swamp, or the treachery of the savage, or the effects of their own imprudence. In all these cases, and many more might be added, things go on just as if no Prayer had been offered at all. Is it therefore unfair to conclude that, as Prayer cannot be verified by statistical investigation, it is a mere delusion from the beginning?"

Those others, who declare themselves open

to conviction, instead of thus settling the matter summarily, exhibit a readiness to commence it. They express themselves somewhat as follows:—"If Prayer be, as it is stated to be, a valuable element towards producing certain effects desired, one would have thought that those who are interested in the production of certain results, physicians for instance, would have discovered its value, have estimated its exact power, and have combined it with the other remedies which they prescribe in their patients' cases. It appears, however, that they do not do so, that they proceed in their treatment of those committed to their care as though Prayer were of no value, or of a value infinitesimally small. This circumstance is a very strange one, for physicians are proverbially men who are anxiously on the watch for anything which can in the least degree assist them in their profession. It is so strange, that we might perhaps be justified in abandoning all belief in the efficacy of Prayer. But we will not decide precipitately. We will submit the matter to the test of calm experiment. Let the advocates of Prayer and ourselves select two wards of a hospital, each of them full of sick persons, and agree upon the following conditions. Both wards shall

receive the same medical attention, the same tender nursing, the same human palliatives of the complaints of the sufferers. But those in one of them shall in addition have the supposed benefit of prayers being offered for their recovery. Those in the other shall be left without that supposed benefit. If the former ward shall present a larger number of instances of restoration to health, or of more speedy or more complete restoration, than the latter, something will have been done towards removing the objection that Prayer is barren of results. At any rate, inducements will then exist to repeat the experiment. Every repetition, if accompanied by a similar result, will go further towards the removal of the objection. At length it will be removed entirely, for no doubt it will be ultimately discovered not merely that Prayer is available, but how much it is available both generally and in particular cases."

Such, though I have not employed the exact terms used by the two classes, is the tenor of what they say respectively. I do not think I have represented them unfairly, though I have divested their allegations and proposal of the cloud of words in which they are enveloped.

I proceed to make a few remarks upon them.

But before I do this, I must remind those who are interested in the subject that these objectors to Prayer appear to have approached it without making allowance in the following points:—

First, that the desire of Prayer has been proved to be intuitive, and that being so, it is contrary to all experience that it should be destitute of results.

Secondly, that *à priori* presumptions against its admissibility as a motive factor in human affairs have been shown to be groundless.

Thirdly, that the probabilities that it would be so admissible are enormously in its favour, and cannot, in fairness, be ignored.

One can devise something like an excuse for those who feel a difficulty as to whether Prayer is answered. From the nature of the case, *i.e.*, from the circumstance that its effects are not supposed to be necessarily immediate, that its production of effects is not visible, that it must be accompanied with perseverance and trust in the superior wisdom of God, and that it implies communion with Him to learn His wisdom thoroughly—it is a work of faith and not of sight. The difficulty, however, cannot be solved by betaking one's self to statistics. A truer method would be, first to examine one's

self as to the origin of doubts in one's own mind—whether, for instance, they sprung up while one was in the continuous habit of Prayer, or whether they did not occur when that habit had been either partially or wholly intermitted. Secondly, whether one cannot recall occasions on which benefits, altogether undeserved, and certainly neither achieved by one's personal exertions, nor sought for by one's personal prayers, have been experienced, which may be attributed to the prayers of others. Thirdly, whether the paucity of visible effects upon the lives of those most frequently prayed for formally, may not be attributable to lack of reality in those formal intercessions—And, fourthly, whether after all, unless one is admitted to a perusal of the whole history of the persons prayed for, it is possible to judge how much, or how little prayers have availed for them, or why, respectively. It may be that many of them have hardened their hearts, and rendered the grace of God ineffectual. To resort, therefore, to statistics in such a matter is an absolute mistake, and we must recommend those whose tastes lead them to such enquiries to apply them to other matters on which they may be legitimately and profitably employed.

This mistake, however, is not so gross, and

does not involve such complete ignorance of the nature of Prayer, of the circumstances which must be connected with it in order to make it real, of the character of Him to Whom it is offered, and, I may add, of the conditions of medicine, as the proposal about the two wards in a hospital. It is said to have been propounded by a medical man. Can this be so? If so, is he ignorant of that first axiom in therapeutics, that no two cases are exactly alike in their character; and that, therefore, it is absolutely impossible to get, let us say, twenty cases in each ward which shall be pitted together as a total, and run a race, as it were, as to speediness and completeness of cure, though professional means only were to be employed? But, to put this aside for a moment, he says, in effect at least, "I do not disbelieve the action of Prayer, I wish to believe it; and I propose the opposition of the two wards in order to determine whether, if the patients in the ward which is prayed for are most successfully treated, it may not be desirable in future to prescribe Prayer as well as other remedies. I shall, doubtless, be able to discover, if I give such and such patients so much quinine, or so much calomel, or so much cooling mixture, and these have recovered, by the assistance of Prayer, so

much earlier and so much more completely than those others which had not that assistance, what is the exact amount of benefit which Prayer contains as a medical motive factor. It will be simply an effort of quantitative analysis on my part. I shall be able for the future to say to the friends of my private patients, Here is my prescription for the drugs to be administered, their proportions and their combinations are exactly set down; you will, of course, go to a good chemist, who will give you genuine drugs, and you will carefully note the hours at which the medicines are to be taken; but I have added an important memorandum, the result of an elaborate experiment: Let so much Prayer be offered also, at such times, and in such words, and the operation of the palpably material medicines will be greatly facilitated."

It is possible that the enunciator of the hospital test will say, "I did not intend to go so far as this; I did not expect the test to be favourable to Prayer." Nay, I reply, then you did not make your proposal seriously. You assured me that you did make it seriously, and I am arguing on the contingency which the very proposal suggested, namely, that the experiment resulted in favour of Prayer. A *quantitative analysis*, granted the possibility of instituting

it in this case, and the genuineness of the materials examined, must end, as I have supposed it to end, in the adoption of practical measures of the kind laid down. But, now, let me ask him some other questions. Has he never heard of what is called *qualitative analysis?*—or, to put the matter in ordinary language, is he not aware that, in order to ascertain the degree in which certain drugs have contributed, or may contribute, to a certain result, the quality of the drugs must be unimpeachable; in fact, that they must be thoroughly good and genuine? Of course he is aware of this—for, in the case of his private patients, he desires his prescriptions to be taken to a good chemist, and, if they fail of effect, he examines the materials of which they are compounded; and he knows perfectly well that spurious materials are often substituted for true. Well, if he knows and does all this, how was it that it did not strike him that a qualitative analysis of the Prayer which he proposed to be offered for one of the wards ought to be instituted? Why did he assume that Prayer offered in that manner can be Prayer at all? It is not Prayer. It absolutely demands a result, it is not supplicatory and submissive; it is an experiment whether the Almighty will—it is not an entreaty

that He may—grant; it demands an immediate and sensible result, it does not wait God's time, and content itself, until that time shall arrive, with inward consolations; it is made to be seen of men, it is not to the Father, Who seeth in secret. If, then, it thus possesses many things which true Prayer has not, and is destitute of what true Prayer has, why did he assume that it is Prayer? One cannot imagine that he is ignorant of the necessity that drugs should be genuine; but it is, to say the least, extraordinary that having, for his purposes, lowered Prayer to the level of a drug, no suspicion should have crossed his mind that the act of thus lowering may have deteriorated it. One can only suppose, that, with all his skill in qualitative analysis, and with all his readiness to apply it in other cases, he never thought of applying it to Prayer; and that he is so unpractised in Prayer as to imagine that it is a cold, formal utterance of the lips; not that intense, holy aspiration which those who really use it well know it to be.* I do not enlarge upon his grievous misapprehension that Prayer

* "To pray with all our heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to our voice through Christ, and verily do the thing that He pleaseth thereupon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare upon earth."—*Coleridge.*

is something like a material and direct efficient or co-efficient in producing results; but his—I trust not intentional—irreverent estimate of the Almighty demands just one remark. It is this: Can he suppose that One Who is omniscient can for a moment be deceived as to the motives with which words professing to be Prayer are uttered? If he supposes this, he deprives the Almighty of the very attribute in right of which He is considered able to give a due answer to Prayer. If he does not suppose it, he must acknowledge that the prayer which he has demanded for the hospital ward is no prayer, but a pretence at Prayer.

One is almost ashamed to spend so much time in animadverting upon a proposal containing so many and such palpable mistakes. For mistakes they are, if the proposal was seriously made. They are worse than mistakes, if it was made otherwise than seriously. But I must turn for a moment from the ward which was to be prayed for, to the patients in that ward from which Prayer was to be withheld. What is his demand with regard to them? That for a time they should be outcasts from the sympathies of the whole race of mankind, that no heart should feel for them, that no voice should plead for them, that they should be left

as entirely to the professional treatment of the physicians, as a piece of wood or stone is left to the ingenuity of the carver. Well, could this demand be, by any possibility complied with? In the first place, can he ensure that none of these patients shall pray for himself and for his companions in sorrow? By what subtilty of selection can so many persons be brought together, every one of whom shall be of a temper to "seek not to the Lord but to the physicians?" And if no selection is to be exercised, what strange concurrence of circumstances can be supposed that will favour such a design? This is certainly one difficulty. But here is another. It is either unknown, or it is known, that this experiment is being carried on. If it is unknown, what is to prevent the millions of prayers which are ascending daily to the throne of God for the sick in general, and especially for those who are desolate, as these afflicted ones would, by hypothesis, undoubtedly be, from embracing their case. But on the other hand, if it is known, would not the action of mankind resemble that which is called forth when a case of special hardship or sorrow is brought to their notice in the newspapers? *Then* special donations flow in, and hundreds of persons who give generally, feel themselves summoned to exercise

additional liberality. So it would be here. Let it be published that for some cruel experiment—as cruel as, and perhaps more needless than, vivisection of an animal—a certain number of their fellow men were about to be excluded from the benefits of intercessory Prayer, and the whole praying world would unite to frustrate the attempt. The voice of sympathizing humanity would—

"Rise like a fountain for them night and day,"*

and if special and specially earnest prayers have any influence, the proposer's design would be signally counteracted. The ward which was not to be prayed for, would be in a better condition than the other.

Enough, however, of this. "I suppose then," the objector says, "that if statistics are inadmissible in the matter, and experiments are irreverent or unavailable towards ascertaining the value of Prayer, you abandon the *à posteriori* method of defending Prayer altogether." Nay, I reply, Let me draw a distinction:—To defend Prayer, *à posteriori*, *i.e.*, from results which shall be patent to all the world as instances of the ordinary relations of effect to cause, is one thing. It is quite another thing to show that it is futile to argue the

* Tennyson. *The Passing of Arthur.*

delusiveness of Prayer, from cases in which it is supposed to have failed, or by an experiment with absurd and impossible, and certainly irreverent conditions annexed to it. Our attention has been directed to the latter of these, not to the former, with what success I leave you to judge. I cannot be fairly described as abandoning what I have never attempted to do. "Well, then," he rejoins, "I suppose that I may take it for granted that Prayer has no visible or tangible results." I reply, If you mean that I am to demonstrate to you that, on my praying for such and such a thing, or for such and such a temper for myself or others, God's agency brought it about, as evidently as a strong man, at the request of a weak man, applies a lever and raises a stone which the other could not raise, I can do nothing of the sort. I never pretended to do anything of the sort. What I say is that those who pray, and continue in Prayer, are sure that there is some eventual result, and are very often convinced that this or that particular occurrence is a result in answer to their prayers. "Well, but, if this is so, you limit its sphere of action to the impetration of spiritual blessings, to the persuasion for instance, that you have a kind and heavenly Father, Who will listen to your requests for

others, and to the requests which others make for you. Enjoy your persuasion, if you like, you shall receive no molestation from me." Nay, I reply, we do not thus part company. Remember, I am not speaking of *my* persuasion only, but of the persuasion of all mankind, founded upon a universal instinct, and confirmed by universal and immemorial practice. I am speaking of a persuasion which, as I have shown, is not only unassailable *à priori*, but credible *à priori*. I never asserted that, *à posteriori*, it is provable to anyone but to a man's self, that a particular Prayer is answered. I only assert this, that the aggregation of men's persuasions that it is answered is, in combination with what has been already adduced, a proof that Prayer has an answer. And let us not be told that many errors have been matters of persuasion, at one time or other, to all mankind: the denial, for example, of antipodes, and the assertion that the earth is the centre of our system, or the ascription of all the changes in the earth's crust, to the action of the Noachical Deluge. None of these notions were founded upon an instinct of man. None of them, in whatever way the questions involved in them were decided, affected man's relation to God, or man's conception of the Divine attributes. The tests of science or

of experience were applied to them, because they admitted such tests. They were found to be delusive persuasions, and they were given up. Find a test which shall disprove the action of Prayer if you please, and if you can. But until you have done so, we shall continue to believe that it does act. You know perfectly well, that, even in physical matters, a test available for one thing, is quite unavailable for another. The presence of arsenic is detected by a test which is worthless for the detection of the presence of prussic acid. Why insist, then, on trying spiritual action by tests which are only applicable to physical action? The Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of Nature, it has been well observed, have distinct rules, and neither can be entered, but by obeying the rules peculiar to each.

But, the objector still rejoins, "Would it not be the best plan to admit at once that the domain of Prayer is the spiritual world only, and that any petitions for alteration or modification in the conditions of the physical world are beyond its province? the physical world of course embracing the bodily health and temporal fortune of ourselves and others, as well as what are ordinarily called physical events and phenomena. If this were allowed

we should get rid of the difficulty which is inevitably suggested by two facts; first, that men often pray for results which cannot be brought about without a miracle, as for rain when there is no sign of it—or for recovery of a sick person, when all reasonable hope is over: secondly, that Prayer for spiritual results may, as you suggest, be tested as to their efficacy, by each person's individual experience."

I reply, for several reasons it is impossible so to limit the domain of Prayer. In the first place, if a man prays for spiritual blessings upon his neighbours, how can he, when his knowledge is so confined as it is, be more assured that his prayers for them in this direction are answered than his prayers for physical blessings upon them? He does not know the heart of any one thoroughly, and may be deceived by the profession which his life exhibits. And even if he possessed exact knowledge of some two or three persons, yet as he prays for all, how shall he be assured of the effect upon all?

Then, again, do not spiritual and physical blessings continually intermingle? If a man prays that he himself or his neighbours may be pure and holy, does he not by inference pray that God's other and more visible blessings,

which it is promised shall accompany these, may be superadded? And if a man's prayer for himself and his family is, that he and they may be loving and considerate of each other's wants and wishes, does not this, almost by a necessity, produce such unity of energetic action as tells greatly upon their temporal fortunes?

Yet, again, as to praying for what is ordinarily called a miracle. I never heard of any man in his sober senses, (except when the Deity has specially empowered him, as in certain cases in Scripture,) praying for what he was convinced would be a miracle. For instance, a man would not pray that he might be saved from destruction though he threw himself into the crater of a volcano in action; or, that the corpse of a friend upon which corruption has set in, may be, in this lower world of ours, restored to present life and vigour. To do this he conceives, and conceives rightly, would be not prayer, but presumption; would be not "to taste and see whether God is gracious," but "to tempt God." But, for all this he does not, by any sharp line of demarcation, settle or attempt to settle the domain of Prayer. He prays for all good things of mind, of body, or estate, with the reservation always, If it seem good to God.

He prays, believing that God will give him and others, if He is approached rightly, what is, in the main, best for them. He subordinates his own short-sighted wisdom to the Divine Wisdom. Knowingly, he would not pray for a miracle, that is for any unusual disposition of things, arranged specially in his behalf. But with his apprehension of God, all the works of the Divine power, even in usual matters, are miracles to him. Therefore, following the bent of true piety, except where he has all the demonstration possible in the case that God has decided in one way, he makes "his requests known to Him," according to the prompting of his chastened heart. Nay, even in the extreme case just now supposed, that where the decaying corpse of his friend lies before him, he still prays, not indeed for his friend, but for himself and others—"Father, teach me to bow to Thy will, and teach that same holy lesson to my brethren, who are suffering under like affliction."

"But if a man thus prays for resignation, and deepens his sympathies with mankind by means of Prayer," the objector pertinaciously rejoins, "what is this but an acknowledgment that Prayer is merely of subjective efficacy, *i.e.*, that it does good merely to himself. I am not

disposed to refuse him permission to compass anything which *seems* beneficial to him." Thank God, the maintainers of Prayer reply, we *are* benefited by it. The more frequently, the more humbly we are on our knees, the higher we are raised, and the more benefit we experience. But it is not because we utter such and such ejaculations, it is not because we are ventilating our feelings, but because we are speaking to an Omniscient God—to a compassionate and loving Father—that we find relief in Prayer. It is because we are approaching Him, and enjoying communion with Him, because we find rest in Him under our difficulties, and because His faithfulness to His promises is our surety, that, though results of Prayer patent to the world are for a time withheld, we believe there will be some results. With us, whatever they may be with you, blessings within and blessings without are equally of His giving. He is not, on the plea that He gives the former, to be denied to be capable of bestowing the latter. When, therefore, we talk of Prayer being a subjective comfort and source of strength, do not imagine for an instant that we are actuated by a blind sentiment which pours itself forth it knows not and thinks not whither. This would indeed be a delusion, not a source of real comfort. We

entreat you to think better, if not of our creed, yet of our common sense, than to count that we worship we know not what. We know what we worship.

But here I must close. I do not dwell further on the subjective efficacy of Prayer, because those who employ Prayer know it, and those who do not employ it cannot understand it, until they have surrendered those doubts as to its intuitive character and to its objective efficacy which I have endeavoured to controvert.* Yet I will say, though perhaps this latter class may think scorn of the assertion, that the subjective efficacy of Prayer is indeed a reality, though it be only spiritually discerned. It is *real* in the case of the martyr

* The following lines of Mrs. E. B. Browning express so touchingly one of the circumstances which lead to a surrender of unbelief, that I cannot help quoting them:—

"'There is no God,' the foolish saith,
But none, 'There is no sorrow;'
And nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow.

"Eyes which the preacher could not school,
By way-side graves are raised;
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Which ne'er said, 'God be praised.'"

Compare Hooker, *Eccl. Pol. B. V.* "Till some admirable or unusual accident happen (as it hath to some), to work the beginning of a better alteration in their minds, disputation about the knowledge of God, with such kind of persons, commonly prevaileth little. For how should the brightness of wisdom shine, where the windows of the soul are, of very set purpose, closed?"

at the stake; he has great peace within, though his Prayers for bodily deliverance are obviously denied. It is *real* in the case of the missionary dying ere a fragment of the work to which he has dedicated the training of a life is accomplished, though his Prayer that he might extend God's visible kingdom by active exertions is not granted. It is *real* in the case of the mourner, though his friend is taken from him—for God will re-unite him to his friend hereafter, if he be faithful. It is *real* in the case even of one who seems alone in the universe, a person on a desert island. Very true it is that, in the exquisite language of Tennyson, Prayer is society and life to him, for

> "Had not his poor heart
> Spoken with That, which being everywhere
> Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
> Surely the man had died of solitude."*

It is *real* to all who believe in a personal God, and in His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness—"If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him." (1 John v. 14, 15.)

If a man tells me he cannot pray, I answer in the words of good Bishop Wilson, "Pray

* Tennyson. *Enoch Arden.*

till you can:" you will find, if not a sign from without at first, yet a sign within that an instinct of your human nature is satisfied. Bye and bye, what you do not recognize at present as signs without that God heareth Prayer, will appear in their true character. "God is," and "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," will be your acknowledgment.

If a man tells me that he has done without Prayer very well; I say, Perhaps you have uttered no Prayer for yourself, but may not others have uttered Prayer for you? Believe me, there are none for whom the Christian prays more earnestly than he does for those who do not pray for themselves. How know you then that the very instrument which you scorn has not been the means of upholding you while you thought that you were upholding yourself? That is a grand passage in the poet just quoted:—

> "More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of.
> * * * * * *
> For what are men better than sheep or goats,
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God." *

* Tennyson. *The Passing of Arthur.*

And that is a grander passage still, and even more to my purpose, which I read in the closing pages of Cowper's *Winter's Walk at Noon*, on the man of Prayer:—

"Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
That, as she sweeps him with her whistling silks,
Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
Of which she little dreams; perhaps she owes
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring,
And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
And think of her who thinks not of herself."

LECTURE V.

LUKE xiii. 1—5.

"There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

"And Jesus answering said to them, 'Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

"'I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

"'Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

"'I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'"

"WE have all of us vigour enough," said a cynical moralist, "to bear the misfortunes of other people."* We have all of us sagacity enough, he might have added, when any signal or sudden misfortune befals a man, or a large body of men, to discover that it is a judgment by which God has visited not sin merely, but special sin.

I class these two tempers together. They have their origin, both the one and the other,

* "Nous avons tous assez de force pour supporter les maux d'autrui."—Rochefoucauld. *Réflexions Morales.*

in lack of true charity. He who indulges in the former is unable to sympathize with the afflicted, to place himself in their position, or to imagine himself converted into a patient from being a spectator. And he who indulges in the latter can by no possibility be described as possessed of the Evangelical virtue which is said "to hope all things," that is, all good things, of a neighbour.

They differ, however, considerably. The unsympathizing, hard, man has no feeling at all; no consideration for the humanity which he shares in common with those who suffer. He places himself quite above it. Like the gods of Epicurus, alluded to in my Third Lecture, he is utterly "careless of mankind."* Appeals to the heart or to the reason are vainly addressed to such a man. Besotted, morally and intellectually, he must be left to the discipline of sorrow. Happy will it be for him if it overtakes him before it is too late.

This is not the case with the other man. He *has* feelings about humanity, but he exercises those feelings wrongly. True charity, indeed, he has not; but he has a consciousness of man's responsibility to God, and of God's power, and sometimes His will, to execute, even in this

* Tennyson.

world, deserved judgment upon man. And his error is that, on seeing his neighbour's misfortunes, he does not turn his thoughts rather to the Mercy which has spared *himself* than to the Justice which has overtaken *them;* that he does not exclaim "I trust they were better than I am," instead of "I believe I am better than they." And he possesses a mind, and uses it. Only he generalizes too hastily. He entertains both narrow historical views, and inadequate notions of God's providence. With such a person we may do much. There is something of man within him to work upon morally; and, coincidently with the attainment of enlarged ideas of society, and of God, its Great Author, to which his intellect may be directed, his heart, by God's blessing, may be enlarged, purified, subdued.

Our blessed Lord, at any rate, thought it worth while to attempt such a task. The text shows how He did so. It shall furnish the key-note to our remarks, the tendency of which will be to clear up a certain moral difficulty, experienced by not a few persons. It is not, indeed, one directly connected with the subject of my first Four Lectures, which treated of the indisposition of man to allow God to interfere in the affairs of His own world, on the petition

of His creatures; but misinterpretation of the manner in which God is supposed to interfere, and a proneness to conceive of Him as regarding one's neighbours only, while one's self is free from His animadversion, is destructive of that humble and personal dependence upon Him which must lie at the root of true Prayer.

The moral difficulty to which I refer is this: In what way should the sudden judgments of God—whether recorded in Scripture, or met with in ordinary history and in life—be regarded?

We will consider first, the cases to which our Lord alludes, and, then, the use to be made of them.

We can only arrive by conjecture at the circumstances of either case. But we may gather something concerning the former of them. About the time when the Taxing mentioned by St. Luke began to be put in force, a political sect sprang up in Palestine, the members of which called themselves, by pre-eminence, Galileans. Their leader was a certain Judas, a Galilean by extraction, and born at Gamala, in the district of Gaulonitis. He was a man of powerful eloquence, which he employed in disseminating the doctrine, "That, God being exclusively the sovereign of the Jewish people,

subjection to a foreign power was degrading, and payment of tribute unlawful." There was much to recommend this to the popular ear. Multitudes readily followed him—the young, the high-spirited, the adventurous, and, it is to be feared, also the fierce and licentious. As their opinions were not mere theories, but manifested themselves both in passive resistance to the Roman imposts, and in active aggression, various efforts were made towards putting them down. It appears, from the Acts of the Apostles (v. 37), that at length Judas was slain, and his society thoroughly dispersed. But it took years to accomplish this—and probably not force only, but force accompanied by treachery, was frequently employed against them. The text is thought to allude to a notorious instance of this. Some Galileans were surprised in the temple while offering sacrifice; Pilate, the Roman Governor, sent his soldiers against them, and slew them in the very act of devotion.

I can tell you no more of this first case, except that it must have occurred very recently, for Pilate had only just come to his government. The fall of the tower of Siloam—a projection from the wall of Jerusalem, close to the pool of that name—must also have been of

recent occurrence; but nothing is known about it, beyond what we read in the text, that by it eighteen persons were suddenly hurried to their account—a death as miserable as unexpected.*

Let their exact circumstances, however, have been what they may, no doubt the two occurrences made a great sensation in Jerusalem, and formed the talk of the day. Some persons, it appears, spoke of the slaughter of the Galileans in our Lord's presence—not commenting to Him openly upon it, but probably persuaded in their own minds that those men perished so miserably because they had sinned most grievously. This construction, I think, may be safely assumed; for it is said that our Lord *answered*, when in fact there was nothing to answer, except the mental inference of His informants. "And Jesus answering said, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered such things? Suppose ye, that is, that, because

* Pilate had appropriated some of the revenue arising from the redemption of vows (Corban) to the formation of an aqueduct, possibly from the pool of Siloam. This appropriation the Jews considered to be sacrilegious, and rose in tumult. Ewald conjectures that the tower may have been part of the works thus undertaken, and that its fall upon the workmen engaged in it was therefore looked upon as a special judgment upon the sin of sacrilege. But all this is too uncertain to be depended upon.

God has permitted Man's hand to be thus raised against them, they were the worst profligates of their confederacy, the most deserving of His indignation?" And then He proceeded—"Put that other case beside theirs. Suppose ye that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all them that dwell in Jerusalem? Was it for their peculiar wickedness that God caused the strong masonry to perish, or the scaffolding which supported it to give way? I tell you, emphatically, nay. What they were in God's sight, whether sinners or just persons—why, if sinners, they were punished thus signally—why, if righteous, they were removed thus suddenly—these things I declare not. Such matters are, and they must remain, among mysteries till the end of time. But this I do declare: Man has no right so to decipher God's dealings, as to decide therefrom on the religious state of his neighbours. Let him rather learn from them these lessons: If these things be punishments, have not I deserved them also? And, except I repent, must I not expect, either a like punishment here, or else its equivalent hereafter?"*

* Compare the following quaint but instructive passage: "The tragical exits and unexpected periods of some

Such, unless I have mis-stated it, is the tenor of our Lord's answer. How needful it was, and *is*, that such an answer should have been given we proceed further to consider.

There are, on the whole, four ways in which it is possible to regard sudden and unexpected events.

They may be attributed to *chance;* but on this we need not dwell. No one would thus attribute them, except the man who can behold the order of the universe, and declare that it is conducted without a Mind;* or who is ignorant of the fact that many things which are now discovered to proceed on system, were formerly

eminent persons cannot but amaze considerate observators, wherein, notwithstanding, most men seem to see by extramission, without reception or self-reflection, and conceive themselves unconcerned by the fallacy of their own exemption: whereas the mercy of God hath singled out but few to be the signals of His justice, leaving the generality of mankind to the pædagogy of example. But the inadvertency of our natures not well apprehending this favourable method and merciful decimation, and that He showeth in some what others also deserve, they entertain no sense of His hand beyond the stroke of themselves. . . . . And since we cannot be wise by warnings, since plagues are insignificant except we be personally plagued, since also we cannot be punished into amendment by proxy or commutation, there is an unhappy necessity that we must smart in our own skins, and the provoked arm of the Almighty must fall upon ourselves." —Sir T. Browne's *Christian Morals*.

* "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind."—Bacon, *Essay on Atheism*.

as unaccountable as anything that looks like chance now.

They may be attributed to *second causes*. As if, for instance, one were to attribute the fall of the Rossberg, in 1806, or the consequent destruction of the four hundred and fifty human beings who inhabited Goldau and its adjacent hamlets, solely to the softness of its stratum of soil, which was operated upon by rain; or the overthrow of the village of Campo Bagnino, in the Val Calanba, in 1514, solely to the subsidence of its site, caused by an earthquake. Mr. Froude, alluding to one of the events mentioned in the text, has converted gravitation into a prime agent. "The tower of Siloam," he writes, "fell not for any sins of the eighteen who were crushed by it; but, through bad mortar probably, the rotting of a beam, or the uneven settling of the foundations. The persons who should have suffered, according to our notion of distributive justice, were the ignorant architects or masons who did their work amiss. But the guilty, perhaps, had long been turned to dust. And the law of gravitation brought the tower down at its own time, indifferent to the persons who might be under it."* All this,

* *Short Studies on Calvinism*, 2nd Ser.: p. 11, quoted by Mr. Eaton, *Bampton Lectures*, Lecture iii.

however, is surely illogical. If a second cause is sufficient, why go beyond that which is immediate? If we go beyond the immediate second cause at all, why not go higher; and though we cannot hear His voice, ascend to Him, the Great First Cause, Who is as able to say to a mountain "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea," (Matt. xxi. 21,) at His good pleasure, as "to lay the foundations of the earth so that they shall be removed forever." (Psalm civ. 5).

But we need not waste our strength, either on those who deny a Sovereign Mind, or on those who thus stultify the operations of their own minds.

We come next to those who, though they attribute these sudden interruptions of man's ordinary progress from his birth to the grave, whether brought about by their fellow-men, or by nature, (so to speak), to the Great First Cause, yet speculate wrongly upon them.

They are right in supposing all death to be connected with sin. It is sin's appropriate wages. All men have sinned; all men are liable to death.

They are right in supposing that God's permission of sudden destruction is connected with sin. Sometimes He has in view the direct

punishment of offenders to whom He has already granted the time allotted for their trial; sometimes the warning against similar sins of others, the full period of whose trial is not yet completed. And He has doubtless other views besides these, which I shall mention presently.

But *they are wrong*, first, in supposing that all who are carried off suddenly, or violently, are carried off for their sins—or at least for special sins. Occasionally, nay, we venture to believe, often, such persons have been God's best and best-loved children. Sinners though they were by nature, yet they have been reconciled to Him in Christ, pardoned, sanctified, accepted, and are now awaiting a joyful resurrection. Besides, as we know very well, temporal punishments, among which such deaths must sometimes be reckoned, do not always fall upon the offenders. The third and fourth generations suffer for an ancestor's sin. Joram, the grandson of Ahab, went down to a bloody grave, partly indeed for his own sins, but also for the sins of Ahab: "Not in his days, but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." (1 Kings xxi. 29, and 2 Kings ix. 24—26).

Again, *they are wrong* in supposing that, though such deaths or temporal evils generally be punishments for sin, they are, in any sort,

God's only punishments. This of course would involve as its consequence that His providence is complete here; that virtue is always rewarded, and vice always punished; a theory so little consistent with the facts of the world, that it would overturn the foundations of morality, make prosperity and length of days the criteria of goodness, and associate sickness, trials, death, with presumptions of special sin. True it is, indeed, that certain crimes and vices draw with them, as a natural consequence, calamities and even death, either by premature decay of body, or by the vengeance of outraged society. But what does this prove? Not, surely, that He Who made heaven and earth, and the regions under the earth, is confined to the earth only for this manifestation of His justice; but that if, in the midst of much that seems opposed to it, His justice is plainly visible here,—it will, it must be, developed in the world which is beyond our vision.

But there is yet another point, in which those persons *are wrong* who suppose that special destruction argues special sin. They materially understate God's design in these sudden visitations. They imagine that He has in view those who die merely. He has in view also, (nay, may we not argue from our

Lord's words and other parts of Scripture, He has in view principally?) the conversion and amendment of the living. He wouldeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. "God's judgments are in the earth," that "men may learn righteousness." (Isaiah xxvi. 9.) "I tell you, nay; but except ye repent," (here is care for the living,) "ye shall all likewise perish."

But this brings us to the fourth manner in which these sudden and violent deaths can be regarded; I should rather say, for we have seen the insufficiency of the other manners, the only one in which they ought to be regarded.

He then who contemplates them aright will consider that God is their author; but that it is impossible to discover, except generally, their final causes in the Divine Mind. God has made everything, he will say, in His own infinite wisdom—and everything that occurs must be directed or permitted by Him, either for the benefit of the physical world, or for the benefit of the moral world; and to repair, to a certain extent, even here, the ravages which sin has committed. He has made fire and hail, snow, vapours and stormy wind. These all fulfil His word—whatever obvious good they effect, whatever evils they appear to inflict—whether

they are clearing the air of miasma or noxious insects, or whether they are destroying Man's works, and even Man with them. (Psalm cxlviii. 8.) So also, in some mysterious manner which we can neither explain nor apprehend, He can make "the wrath of Man praise Him." (Psalm lxxvi. 10.) The wicked "is a sword of His" (Psalm xvii. 3); yea, "the wicked is made" by Him "for the day of evil." (Prov. xvi. 4.) And what though there be much that is perplexing in the way that the good are sometimes involved in the destruction which overtakes the ungodly—or the ungodly spared for the sake of the good—or the good afflicted or cut off—or the wicked allowed to be prosperous and to live long? These things do not shake his faith. He believes in a day of retribution, in which men will be judged according to their opportunities, their resources, their education, their means of grace, their length of span, their other advantages, so that none shall have just reason to complain.

Thus, he believes thoroughly, what he is taught by Holy Scripture, that "God turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein," (Psalm cvii. 34) that pestilence—that earthquake—that war—that evil governors—that persecution—that out-

breaks of popular fury—that foreign invasions, are and were intended to be scourges of mankind, and tokens of God's displeasure at what is evil in the world. But he refrains carefully from judging of the state of the individual men who perish in this or that catastrophe. He avoids the vanity of supposing that he can discover the inner springs of events. And he avoids also the temptation of thinking that he is safe, because he does not at this moment suffer as they suffer. And in this he shows great self-knowledge, great wisdom, and great charity. Great self-knowledge, because on looking to his own heart he finds *that* within it which may lead to the same sins which they have possibly committed. Great wisdom, because it is a cheaper method to profit by the experience of others than to purchase experience for himself. Great charity, because, as he condemns no one individually, he hopes the best of all. They may have sinned seriously, he says—but *I* judge them not. Who knows but they were ready for death, and were removed for my sake to warn me, who am not ready?* Who

* The following lines, in Cowper's *Timepiece*, on the earthquake in Sicily, may serve as an interesting illustration :—

" Alas for Sicily, ...
What then? Were they the wicked above all,

knows but they were taken away, because the "world was not worthy of them;" (Hebrews xi. 38) or (if their afflictions do not amount to death) who knows but God was in this way purifying them for Himself, purging away what was earthly in them, visiting them sorely in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord?

So argues he, whom, because he follows that method of interpreting God's dealings which Christ inculcates in the text, I shall venture to term the Christian interpreter of Providence. And the temper which I have endeavoured to describe is, in his case, no mere theory. It is with him as he dwells safely in his house, or as he travels abroad—as he hears of his neighbour's disasters, or as he visits the scenes where they occurred—as he considers the deaths of individuals, or marks the calamities of nations—as he peruses a biography and its close, or as he threads the annals of that more complex life, the life of a people. Always and in every place he asks himself in the spirit of our Lord's words,

> And we, the righteous, whose fast anchored isle
> Moved not, while theirs was rocked like a light skiff,
> The sport of every wave? No, none are clear,
> And none than we more guilty; but where all
> Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
> Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose His mark,
> May punish if He please the less to warn
> The more malignant."

Suppose I that those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? Suppose I that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwell at Jerusalem? Suppose I, when pestilence is in my own land, those who are perishing by it to be sinners above all their countrymen? Or, when the lava-stream burst from Vesuvius, and overwhelmed the town of Pompeii and its pagan inhabitants, that they were sinful above all the other pagans who dwelt upon the Bay of Naples? Or, when that earthquake, rather more than a century ago, in 1755, visited Lisbon and destroyed 30,000 persons, and almost levelled the city with it, that those who perished were sinners above their fellow-citizens? Or when, within the last twenty-six years, a political storm passed over Europe, and was not laid till many a fair hope had been ruined, and many peaceful citizens had fallen by the sword, that those who thus fell were more sinful than those who were spared? Or when, as recently, war and revolution were devastating France and uprooting the very foundations of French society, that those who suffered peculiarly deserved their fate? Why, history would rise up against

me if I ventured to assert anything of the sort. It is on record that the inhabitants of Goldau were remarkable for their purity of character. When the earthquake occurred at Lisbon,* a vast multitude of the population were at prayer in the churches, it being All Saints' Day. The paintings found in Pompeii are, perhaps, indicative of much grossness of morals and manners, but they are surpassed by what has been discovered elsewhere. It is a notorious fact that both in the Great French Revolution and in the European disturbances of 1848, innocent and inoffensive persons perished as well as others. The Archbishop of Paris and the Curé of the Madeleine, who pined in the dungeon of Mazas and died in the courtyard of La Roquette, were surely innocent victims in the days of the Commune. And we can all remember how many of those whom we considered the best amongst us were carried off by the cholera on the several occasions of its visiting England. Be it, then,

* "Another effect of the Lisbon earthquake, more trifling, yet not to be slighted by any close observer of national feelings and customs, was the prohibition of London masquerades. It was feared that the continuance of these diversions might draw down upon England the same calamity which Portugal had just sustained. On the other hand, a pamphlet was published at Madrid to prove that this calamity was allowed to befal the Portuguese solely on account of their connection with the heretic English."—Earl Stanhope, *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht.*

far from me to judge my brethren. Let me think rather of myself and my own nation, and of that solemnly affectionate warning, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

It must not, however, be imagined that though he judges thus charitably, our Christian interpreter of Providence is unobservant of the general tendency of events, or forgetful that sin and suffering are connected somewhat as cause and effect—that, if sin has occurred, its penalty will at some time be exacted—and, on the other hand, that, if suffering exists, sin must somewhere and at some time have existed as its antecedent. It is, indeed, because he has large and general views that he refrains from making that narrow and uncharitable estimate which our Lord so pointedly condemns. It is because he has learned that God is not like man, ready to strike at once, "sudden and quick in quarrel,"* or traceable in each step of His proceedings, that he forbears, on hearing of or seeing any great overthrow, to attribute it necessarily to the special guilt of all or any of the sufferers. And, although he is of course conscious that fear of punishment is not the best reason for avoiding sin, he is thankful, O how thankful, to be by any means, and through whatever

* *Shakspere.* As You Like It, Act ii. Sc. 7.

motives, deterred from it; he recognizes, even in secondary motives, the training and disciplining hand of his great Educator—Who, though He be a God of love, yea, because He is a God of love, uses fear to draw men to Him, rather than at once inflict suffering, or at once cut them off from repentance and His mercy in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps it would be profitable that we may not have treated of this subject as a sort of intellectual divertisement, or as a mere problem of speculative theology, to ask ourselves seriously this question: With what feelings do we regard, we will not say the sudden deaths merely, but the reverses of our brethren? "There is something," said Rochefoucauld,* "even in the misfortunes of our best friends, which is not altogether displeasing to us." Of course, he intended to imply that our desire for superiority is so selfish, so utterly engrossing, that we would gratify it even at the expense of those we love. It is not pleasant to probe our hearts in this way; and perhaps we are inclined to believe that Rochefoucauld was soured by the world, and took too severe a view of human nature. It may be he was soured; it may be he did in

* "Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis, nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplaît pas."—Rochefoucauld. *Réflexions Morales.*

some instances take too severe a view; but I think there is an element of truth in that unpalatable statement of his. At any rate, we cannot help allowing that we desire to excel others; that we desire to persuade ourselves that we do excel others. At the same time, we like to take the easiest way of effecting these objects. Now, it is easier to argue from others' failures to their sins, than to point to any merits of our own. Our argument proceeds thus: Let it once be established that sin necessarily and immediately generates its consequences—then we, who are free from its consequences, are necessarily free from sin.

If this is our tendency, we should surely do well, when we hear of our neighbours being cast down, or brought suddenly to a fearful end, to beware of such thoughts as the following: I do not wonder at it—no doubt they deserved it; or, I always thought that it would be so; or, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs xvi, 18). Though this last be a Scriptural sentence, it was written to promote self-criticism, not to invite men to detraction. Besides, what should we think were our relative circumstances reversed? What should we *then* look for at the hands of others? Should we not consider ourselves to

be the victims of events which we could not control, or even to be hardly used by our Maker, if our hearts were ill-disciplined? Or, if we were trained to see God's hand in our misfortunes as well as in our successes, should we not say that we perceived in our reverses the care of a loving Father, either correcting what is amiss in us, or purging even the branches that bring forth fruit that they may bring forth more fruit. In the former case, should we not expect sympathy from our fellow-men; and, in the latter case, from our fellow-Christians? I am very strongly of opinion that we should. "Whatsoever, therefore, we would that men should do unto us, let us do so even unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Did we bear this maxim more in mind we should, I believe, be checked not merely in our estimates of those who have fallen apparently under God's displeasure, but in our utterance of those disparaging reflections, and unkind, uncharitable remarks which we, alas! so liberally shed abroad. The unfair insinuation—the envious, carping word—the attempt to discover flaws in our neighbours' performances, would be banished from our common talk; the tale of scandal would be unrelished, and the backbiter

silenced by a frown. These all proceed from the same root, the desire to be better than others—negatively, instead of positively—by contrast with their position, instead of by ascertainment of our own. Society might lose in brilliancy—in smart sayings, perhaps; individuals might decline in reputation for keen discernment of character; but both would gain in charity.

I will only add one instance which shows how wrongly men judge of their brother's state from the calamities which he is allowed to suffer. It is this: Very shortly after the words of the text were spoken, *One* hung upon a cross at Jerusalem. The death He was dying was that of a malefactor. The constituted authorities of His country, Herod and Pontius Pilate—the very Pilate who shed the blood of the Galileans, probably to help Herod; the very Herod against whom, as the creature of Rome, those Galileans had risen in rebellion—had given Him up to His accusers, and His accusers were His own countrymen. Surely this Man was everything that His violent and untimely death argued Him to be. Surely He was not worthy to live, "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Surely the men of His day were justified when "they hid, as it were, their faces from Him,"

when "they despised Him and esteemed Him not." But it was not so. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah liii.)

LECTURE VI.

NUMBERS XV. 32—36.

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath Day.

"And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

"And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.'

"And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses."

THE legislative code of Draco, the Athenian Lawgiver, was one of great severity. He is reported to have himself justified that severity by observing that the least offences deserved death, and that he could devise no greater punishment for the worst. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to believe that he did not frame some kind of scale of retributions; and we know that there were some offences for which he provided milder sentences—such as that of loss of franchise, or a mulct of ten oxen; but it is tolerably certain that he enacted

the same capital punishment for petty thefts as for sacrilege and murder. Hence Demades was thought to have described the character of his laws very happily, when he said that they were written not in ink, but in blood. After every abatement made, in consequence of our imperfect information upon the subject, they must have been, to a great extent, undiscriminating and unduly severe. This fact remains, whatever may have been Draco's motive. He may have been led by some principle of abstract justice to confound all gradations of guilt; he may have viewed offences under a religious rather than a political aspect, and conceived that in every case alike they drew down the anger of the gods, which could only be appeased by the death of the criminals; or he may have had other motives.*

But I have only mentioned the case of Draco for the purpose of illustrating a part of the difficulty which has been felt by many persons in reference to the punishments which the Almighty is represented in Scripture as awarding to sin. These have been frequently animadverted upon as absolutely deficient in discrimination, and, it is added, they are, or

* See Bishop Thirlwall's *History of Greece*, Vol. II. p. 19, ed. 1836, for the outlines of this account of Draco's legislation.

seem to be, capriciously and inequitably administered. It is said "Death is the punishment denounced upon him who gathers sticks on the Sabbath Day, an offence of a purely positive character; death is denounced upon him who commits murder, an offence of high moral guilt. Surely this is want of discrimination in enactment." It is said, again, "Yet such is the capriciousness with which this severe code is administered, that while one man is struck dead for just touching the Ark of God, another, who actually intrudes upon the Priest's office and offers sacrifice, is merely smitten with leprosy and deprived of the kingly office that he happened to bear. Surely this is capriciousness in administration." "Now," observes an objector, "I know not how to criticise these things consistently with reverence for the Almighty. I feel at liberty to pass judgment upon the legislation of Draco. He was a mere man. I would fain, if I could, suppose that Moses, a mere man also, or the other human agents in carrying out the Divine laws, were responsible for these defects in principle or in practice. But I find God enacting and God administering. How am I to except to what, if Scripture comes from God and records His dealings, must certainly be attributable to Him?

Or, if I am not to except to it, how am I to explain what is repugnant to my moral sense, which is itself a gift of God to me. Solvé me these questions, if it is in your power to do so. If you cannot, I must, though unwillingly, abandon the God of Scripture and worship only the God of Nature."

Such is the difficulty of which I have to treat to-day. It is not the difficulty of which I treated in my Fifth Lecture, but a distinct one. *There* I had to deal with the question, "What is to be thought of the moral state of those who are involved in what are called God's sudden judgments?" *Here* I have to deal with the principles upon which the God of Scripture lays down, and the method with which He administers, punishments for offences. And I have to explain several perplexing instances which appear, at first sight, to impeach the Divine character in these two respects. This I shall now endeavour to do, premising, however, just one word of warning to our conscientious objector: Suppose, for a moment, that your worst anticipations come true, that the legislation and recorded administration of the God of Scripture cannot be entirely made clear, it is at least within the verge of possibility that you may find similar difficulties in Theism.

But to our purpose.

My mode of procedure will be, First, to state the most prominent cases in Scripture to which exception has been made.

Secondly, to enunciate certain principles and facts by reference to which I believe those cases, and others like them, may be met.

Thirdly, to show how such cases are met by such principles and facts.

The chief cases, upon which objections to the principle of God's legislation in Scripture have been founded, appear to be the following.

It is laid down in the book of Deuteronomy,* with great clearness and precision, what shall be the punishment of a son who, after many warnings, and after a long application of discipline, has obstinately rejected the moral obligation to obey his father and his mother:—

'If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and

* *Deut.* xxi. 18, 21.

rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.' (Deut. xxi. 18, 21.) Such is the statute. "I do not discuss, at present," says the objector, "whether it is too severe in its provisions; this is a distinct question. But I wish to observe that the punishment awarded to the offence is death, and I suppose that the reason for this is, that high guilt is implied in the transgression of a moral precept, the heinousness of transgressing which is intimated by the voice within. But, if this reason for the punishment is discoverable here, I look for it in vain in another case which the Almighty Himself determines, His administration amounting in fact to a fresh legislation for an offence not provided with external punishment in any existing law. That case is recorded in the Book of Numbers in the following terms:—

'And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath Day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congre-

gation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.' (Numbers xv. 32—36.) Now, the obligation which this man violated was clearly not one of a moral, but of purely a positive character. I grant that the obligation to devote a certain portion of one's time to the special service of God is a moral one. I grant, again, that the Sabbath Day Rest was founded upon it, by Divine direction, and was the way in which that obligation was to be fulfilled by the Israelites; but there was nothing which should direct the Israelites, *à priori*, to dedicate a seventh portion of their time to that rest. There was nothing to point them to any one day in the week in preference to any other day; still less, was there anything to indicate, *à priori*, the particular way in which the rest should be observed, or the exact offences which were to be considered as infringements of it; or, even supposing this to be so, the exact penalty by which infringements of it were to

be visited. And this last remark is confirmed by what appears in the narrative: 'It was not declared what should be done to him.' And so my difficulty occurs: How is it that the Divine Legislator—acquainted, as I must suppose Him to be, with the heart of the creature that He Himself framed, and cognizant of what He has written upon that heart, and of the obviously different heinousness of transgressing laws sanctioned both within and without, and laws written without only—should have assigned the same penalty, death, to one and to the other.

"But to pass," continues the objector, "from my complaint that the legislation of God in Scripture is undiscriminating, I must remark, secondly, that the Divine Laws appear to be capriciously administered. The man who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day in the wilderness was punished with death. But for centuries, during which we can scarcely suppose that the Sabbath was strictly kept, similar transgressions would seem to have escaped punishment altogether. A few remonstrances indeed were made by the prophets as the Great Captivity drew nigh, and some faint efforts at reformation upon the subject were made by Nehemiah after the Return. But I proceed.

"The worshipping of false Gods, the sins of Murder and Adultery, are punishable with death, both as violations of the Moral Law, and as denounced by God's prohibitions of them. (Lev. xx. 1—5; Gen. ix. 6; Lev. xx. 10.) 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech: he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile My sanctuary, and to profane My holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.' (Lev. xx. 1—5.) 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.' (Gen. ix. 6.) 'And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his

neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.' (Lev. xx. 10.) Instances occur in the Pentateuch of the enforcement of this penalty against idol-worship generally. But what are we to say of its non-enforcement in the case of Solomon, of whom it is expressly said—'Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon?' (1 Kings xi. 7.) The ordinary administration of justice no doubt consigned many an ordinary homicide and many an ordinary adulterer to death. But, again, what are we to say of the impunity which ensued on David's constructive murder of Uriah, with which was connected his adultery with Bathsheba? (2 Sam. xi., xii.) Then, as for the sin of lying. The 'old prophet' who lied unto the man of God who came out of Judah escaped punishment altogether, though he might have been supposed to be especially guilty, as having enjoyed very close access to God—(1 Kings xiii.) Gehazi, who lied for gain, was afflicted for life with leprosy, and his sin was visited on his descendants. (2 Kings v. 20—27.) But it might have been urged, in extenuation of his sin, that he was a poor man, and that he was

overcome by a strong temptation, which was natural under his circumstances. It was only in the case of Ananias and Sapphira that the extreme penalty for lying was exacted. (Acts v. 1—11.)

"Again, as to disobedience to positive precepts, there seems to be a strange amount of inconsistency in the manner in which cases involving it were visited. There was a peculiar sanctity attached to the Ark of God: the sons of Kohath were to come to bear it when the camp set forward on a journey, but they might not touch any holy thing, for the Ark was to be borne by staves, lest they should die. (Numbers iv. 2—4, 15.) There was a peculiar family, that of Aaron, which was alone empowered to offer incense before the Lord. (Numbers xvi. 40; xviii. 7), and any stranger that came nigh to perform that service was to be put to death. Now, as before, I am not discussing the reasonableness or propriety of the penalties assigned to the transgression of these precepts: but I cannot help observing that there is a capriciousness in the enforcement of them for which I find it hard to account. The ark was being conveyed from Kirjath-jearim to a more fitting home, I read in the Second Book of Samuel: in its progress the oxen that were

drawing the cart in which it had been placed shook it, and it seemed about to fall; a man named Uzzah, who, with his brothers, was driving the cart, 'put forth his hand and took hold of it,' obviously in pious care to prevent its falling. What was the sequel? The penalty of death was at once exacted: "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error (or his rashness, as the margin has it); and he died there by the ark of God." One would have thought that, if there ever was a case in which even a human administrator would have mitigated the severity of a statute, this would have been such a case. The occurrence staggered, as well it might have done, even the faith of David, for the story proceeds, 'And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?' (2 Sam. vi. 6—9.) I may be excused if it staggers mine. And I am more perplexed still when I peruse the record of what took place some centuries afterwards in reference to Uzziah, the King of Judah. No rashness or error could be pleaded in extenuation of his

offence. It is admitted, on the face of the record, that he acted proudly and presumptuously, and in defiance of most earnest expostulation on the part of those whose privileges he was infringing. As a king he had probably been instructed in the law of Moses; and, though this were not so, the priests reminded him of its express provisions. But, though Uzzah, for his momentary and impulsive error, was visited with death, Uzziah's punishment was commuted for the infliction of leprosy. The record shall speak for itself:—'When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shalt it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose

up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.' (2 Chron. xxvi. 16, 23.) And, to make my perplexity greater still, I discover, in Lev. iv. 2, and v. 15—17, statutes which make allowance for sins of ignorance, and ordinances by which involuntary trespasses might be atoned for. No such allowance is made for sins of pride and presumption. Why was not the fault of Uzzah condoned? What reason was there for commutation of punishment in the case of

Uzziah? I do not ask these questions in a cavilling spirit, but the matters involved in them are indeed hard to be understood.

"There are instances also of disobedience to special commands," the objector continues, "which, if no allowance is to be made for circumstances of temptation and the like, should, it seems to me, have had equal punishment meted to them,—if such allowance is to be made, appear to have deserved a consideration very different from that which Scripture records them to have received. I will quote three of them. God had told Saul by the voice of Samuel, that 'the prophet would come down to him in seven days and offer sacrifice, and that he was to wait until he, Saul, was further informed by Samuel what he was to do.' (1 Sam. xiii. 7—14.) The command was clear and unmistakeable. But, because Samuel delayed, or appeared to delay, and the allegiance of the army began to waver, the king took the office of sacrificer upon himself, and did not wait for Samuel. On another occasion (1 Sam. xv.), Saul had been commanded to destroy the Amalekites and their possessions with an utter destruction; on pretence of desiring to retain materials for sacrifices to God, but really because he coveted

the spoil—though, inconsistently enough, he endeavoured to throw the blame upon the people,—Saul refrained from destroying 'the best of the sheep and the oxen;' and, in order, probably, to grace his triumph, he spared the life of Agag, the King of the Amalekites. Now, I do not find that, on either of these occasions, personal punishment was inflicted upon Saul—It was announced to him that his children should not inherit the sceptre that he wielded, and that a neighbour of his, more righteous than he, should reign in his stead; but he himself was allowed to live, and to live as a king—unfaithful as he had been, in the very presence of miracles; avaricious as he had been, in the midst of plenty; insincere and inconsistent as he had proved himself to be by the excuses which he had offered for his disobedience. What could such a man have cared for a penalty which was merely to affect his descendants? He thought of no one but himself. In the same breath in which, after Samuel's rebuke, on the second of these two occasions, he made the formal acknowledgment, 'I have sinned,' I hear him saying, 'Yet honour me now, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.' He

obtains his request, and lives on. He has no punishment at the moment—his dignity is saved —and the degradation of his family is no punishment at all to him. But, contrast with these two instances the third, which I am now about to mention. A man of God was sent by the word of the Lord to prophesy against Jeroboam. He manfully performed that command, and resisted a temptation to break an injunction which he had received not to refresh himself in the house of the king. 'It was charged me,' he said, 'by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.' (1 Kings xiii.) Wearied he must have been, for he had journeyed out of Judah to Bethel on his errand; and when we next hear of him he was sitting under an oak, travel-worn, doubtless, and hungry. A brother prophet, from motives of his own, wickedly induced him to break the command of abstinence, by pretending a special revelation that he was commissioned to bring him to his house. The result was a fearful and bloody termination of the career of the prophet from Judah. His manful performance of his dangerous errand to Jeroboam; his resistance to temptation at first; the fact that he was deceived by a brother prophet,

whom he might have supposed both to be personally incapable of a falsehood, and to have been mercifully enjoined to entertain him; his own weariness and fasting condition; and, let me add, his brave encountering the sentence of death when announced to him; all these go for nothing. He dies, and dies at once. And thus, so far as is manifest on the face of the Scriptural document, his punishment and that of Saul stand in an inverse ratio to the circumstances of extenuation with which the respective offences of the two men were accompanied. Again, I say, I would crave, if I may do so without irreverence, something like an explanation of this apparent miscarriage of justice.

"I do not wish," the objector continues, "to raise unnecessary cavils; but one more point has struck me, in which I think that the Divine administration of punishments, as it appears in Scripture, demands considerable elucidation. Punishment does not always appear to fall upon the main offender. The leader in an offence, the person who should, from the advantages enjoyed by him in right of education and position have known better, escapes—the multitude, the common herd, the mere instruments in the offence, are subjected to penalty. I am not much surprised that this should be so in affairs

where no Divine interference is visible. There, many circumstances of human weakness or of human intrigue will come in. Let me take an illustration. You will remember that striking romance of Scottish history, in which Sir Walter Scott, after having described the vengeance of Douglas on the three meaner contrivers of the death of Rothsay, relates the conversation of the stern Earl with his kinsman. 'As they two rode through the forest, they looked back, and beheld the three bodies hanging, like specks darkening the walls of the old castle.

The hand is punished, said Douglas, but who shall arraign the head by whose direction the deed was done!

You mean the Duke of Albany? said Balveny.

I do, kinsman; and were I to listen to the dictates of my heart, I would charge him with the deed, which I am certain he has authorized. But there is no proof of it beyond strong suspicion, and Albany has attached to himself the numerous friends of the House of Stewart, to whom, indeed, the imbecility of the king and the ill-regulated habits of Rothsay, left no other choice of a leader. Were I, therefore, to break the bond which I have so lately formed with Albany, the consequence must be civil war, an

event ruinous to poor Scotland while threatened by invasion from the activity of the Percy, backed by the treachery of March. No, Balveny, the punishment of Albany must rest with Heaven, which, in its own good time, will execute judgment on him, and on his house.'

"Well, I say, this state of things is to be expected to occur, where, to use the common parlance, men are left to themselves. But what am I to think when, under a direct Theocracy, I meet with such anomalies as the following: Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. (Numbers xii. 1.) Aaron is not punished at all, except by a rebuke. Miriam is punished, indeed, by the infliction of leprosy, but even this is removed after seven days. The cause of their dissatisfaction was a trifling one—and they, above all, should, from their nearness to God, have understood the mission and the character of their chieftain and brother. Such offenders seem to be persons who should have been visited summarily and signally. Now see what took place when the people murmured. It is true that, as was very just, no doubt, Korah, the ringleader of a certain factious rebellion, and his two hundred and forty-nine companions who offered incense, had been consumed by fire, and that his family and

the families of the conspirators had been swallowed up by an earthquake. But might not the ignorant multitude have been spared? They murmured, indeed, on the morrow against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. If no good excuse could be found for them, their want of knowledge, and possibly their sense of bereavement of friends and relatives, might have been some excuse. It is not so. A plague is divinely inflicted upon them, and upwards of 14,000 are destroyed. This stands, so it strikes me, in strange contrast to the comparative impunity accorded to Miriam and Aaron. I am scarcely more satisfied also with the proceedings which ensued on the idolatry offered to the Golden Calf. Aaron, who was not indeed the suggester of, but the weak instrument in providing, that idol, escapes, so far as we can see, without punishment. His plea, which seems to be an evasive and cowardly one, is accepted by Moses without comment (Exod. xxxii. 22—24): 'Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us, for, as for this Moses that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we

wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it unto me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this Calf.' This plea, I say, is accepted by Moses without comment. But while Aaron escapes, 'The Lord plagued the people because they made the Calf which Aaron made,' (Exod. xxxii. 35) and an immemediate slaughter of them, to the amount of about 3,000 men, was executed, by Divine command, under the swords of the sons of Levi. Is this the judgment of One Who is no respecter of persons? I ask, I trust not irreverently, for a reply.

"One more specimen of my difficulties on this head before I close. I read in the 24th chapter of the Second Book of Samuel that David sinned against God in numbering the people; but I do not read that David, without whose action in the matter the numbering could not have taken place, was individually punished. On the contrary, he was allowed to choose *the one* amongst the three propositions of the prophet Gad which freed him from any personal hardship. Of the people, 70,000 men were caused to die by a pestilence. So perplexing was this dispensation, that even David himself was moved by it.

Hence his address to the Lord: 'Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father's house.' Can it be that a sanction is conceded by the God of Scripture to the remark which the anomalies of Man's government frequently suggests,—

'When doting monarchs urge
Unsound resolves, their subjects feel the scourge.' *

If it be so, my allegiance to Him as a God of justice is sorely tried."

Thus far, our objector. I now go on to the second part of my proposed task, the enunciation of certain principles and facts by reference to which I believe the cases brought forward by him, and other cases which resemble them may be met. These may not, indeed, meet them thoroughly, but they may operate towards the arrest on our part of hasty characterizing of God's dealings.

Let me, however, recall to your memories for a moment the exact questions before us. They are not to be confounded with that of

* Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.
Hor. Epist. i. 2, 14.
The rendering in the text is that of Francis.
Hesiod, *Op. et D.*, had said long before—
ὄφρ' ἀποτίσῃ δῆμος ἀτασθαλίας βασιλήων.

which Bishop Butler treats—whether there are sufficient indications of punishment following ill-desert in the natural world to render it not improbable that such is the case in the moral world; or whether, as delay does not imply impunity in the former, it need raise an expectation of impunity in the latter. Our questions are quite distinct from his. They are these:—Are the punishments awarded to ill-desert in Scripture founded upon laws of a Draconic character? Are they capriciously and impulsively administered—that is, are they unreasonably severe? Does an undue and obviously unaccountable respect of persons cause the punishment of one offender to differ unfairly from that of another offender?

But, to our purpose.

The first principle that I would lay down to assist in the solution of our objector's difficulties is this:—*Although moral and positive duties possess this strongly marked distinction, that the propriety of the former is at once evident, the propriety of the latter not at once, yet, as soon as a positive command is ascertained to have proceeded from an authority recognized by the moral sense, it is as obligatory as a moral duty is.* It follows, of course, that if God, Whose claim upon our obedience is felt to be in accordance

with our inward constitution, has enjoined unequivocally that He will be worshipped in a certain way, we are bound, though we should not, *à priori*, have found out that way for ourselves, and though we cannot discover all the reasons of His injunction, to obey it to the very letter. Nay more, that we are to obey it, though sometimes we fancy we see reasons against it. The injunction may refer to a ceremony indifferent* in itself. It may involve for the time an overruling of our personal capacity by a sense of ministerial responsibility. Still, we are to obey it, remembering from Whom it has proceeded. This principle obtains even in human legislation. A provision, intrinsically of no importance, occurs in a statute passed by an acknowledged Government. No discretion can be permitted as to compliance with it.

But, here is a second principle—

The Divine Founder of Law, if He may be trusted to legislate, may surely be trusted to

* Compare *Arist. Eth. Nic.* v. 7, 1:—

Τοῦ δὲ πολιτικοῦ δικαίου, τὸ μὲν φυσικόν ἐστι, τὸ δὲ νομικόν. φυσικὸν μὲν, τὸ πανταχοῦ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχον δύναμιν, καὶ οὐ τῷ δοκεῖν ἢ μή. νομικὸν δὲ, ὃ ἐξ ἀρχῆς οὐθὲν διαφέρει οὕτως ἢ ἄλλως, ὅταν δὲ θῶνται, διαφέρει· οἷον τὸ μνᾶς λυτροῦσθαι, ἢ τὸ αἶγα θύειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ δύο πρόβατα· ἔτι ὅσα τῶν καθέκαστα νομοθετοῦσιν· οἷον, τὸ θύειν Βρασίδᾳ, καὶ τὰ ψηφισματώδη.

administer. It follows that as He must be supposed to have laid down His enactments with thorough acquaintance with the hearts of men, and with their needs both as individuals and as members of a body, He must be supposed capable of adjusting their application. There may be circumstances, known only to His infinite wisdom, which render it necessary to suspend an enactment, with a view to the general good, in the case of certain persons or for a certain time. There may be reasons for stringently and immediately enforcing it. There may be, in the case of individuals, circumstances of palliation. Though these may not be obvious *to us* at once, though they may not be discoverable *by us* at all, they are certainly known to Him. If, too, it is a prerogative of earthly sovereigns to commute capital for other punishments, is such a prerogative to be denied to the Great Sovereign of the universe?

Here is a third principle.

God's administration is not confined to the world visible, even in this life. It follows that we need not suppose that because a man suffers no punishment which every one can at once appreciate, he suffers no punishment at all. And it follows also that, though outwardly two men may appear to have the same punishment

awarded to them, the suffering experienced will not necessarily be the same. Their moral sensibilities, their previous habits, and positions, may be so different that what is light to one, is inexpressibly grievous to the other.

Here is a fourth principle.

God's administration extends to the world to come as well as to this world. It follows that, as we conceive it possible that justice, though delayed *here* for a time, may overtake the offender, even in our imperfect state of things, it may, though delayed altogether till the next life, overtake him *there.*

Here is a fifth principle.

Punishment is not the less due because a man is ignorant what will be its exact character. It is due whenever a man knows that he is transgressing, or might have known.

Here is a sixth principle.

The maxim, defendit numerus, *is not applicable to the Divine administration.* If a man individually deserves punishment, it is nothing to him that his neighbours appear to escape. He does not know that they eventually escape. The presumption is all the other way.

Here is a seventh principle.

The ignorance which is spoken of in Scripture as in the mercy of God exempting a man from

*punishment, must be one which he could not help.** And surely God must be permitted, in right of His acquaintance with men's hearts and lives, to determine when and how far an ignorance of this sort can be pleaded.

And here is the concluding principle.

Punishment is sometimes a vindictive visitation for the good of society, and not always a corrective visitation as regards an individual. And it very often happens that the sparing of an individual for a time, or a summary punishment of an individual, may be good and exemplary for the society to which he belongs. God is surely to be allowed to determine when this arrangement shall take place, especially as something within us bids us look forward to a time of final adjudication and retribution.

Such are the principles which I would submit to our objector. I have but to call his attention to one or two facts which have escaped him before I proceed to apply these principles to the cases which he has alleged.

1. Very significant indications are supplied in the narrative of several of his cases of the action of the principles above given.

* *Conf. Arist. Eth. Nic.*—iii., 5—7.

Νομοθέται . . . κολάζουσι καὶ τιμωροῦνται τοὺς δρῶντας μοχθηρὰ, ὅσοι μὴ βίᾳ, ἢ δι' ἄγνοιαν ἧς μὴ αὐτοὶ αἴτιοι.

2. Even though this is not so in all, yet the instances in which they are supplied are sufficient evidence that such action existed.

But to our task.

The man who was put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day while the Israelites were in the wilderness may be shown by many of the considerations given above to have justly deserved his sentence, and to have been no special subject for mercy. It was only very recently that the precept of the Sabbath rest, which carried out the natural sentiment that a certain portion of man's time is to be redeemed from worldly labours and devoted to God and the soul, had been promulgated. There could be no mistake about the Divine intentions as to the way in which it should be kept. The miraculously sent manna shower was withholden on the Sabbath Day, as was foretold. Corruption of what was gathered on the sixth day was arrested for the needs of the seventh, though this was not the case with manna gathered on any other day. (Exod. xvi. 22—30.) Those who went out to gather on the seventh day were disappointed. God condescended even to make His own mysterious and mystical Rest after the six days' work of Creation a type and ensample of man's rest.

"Therefore the Lord blessed the Rest Day and hallowed it." No one was "to stir from his place on that day." Well, in spite of this clear and recent legislation, a certain man chose to gather sticks on the Sabbath Day. He did this in defiance of a warning that death was the penalty denounced by the Almighty. (See Exod. xxxi. 14; Exod. xxxv. 2.) It could not even be pleaded that gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day was a work of necessity. No fire was to be kindled throughout the habitations of the Israelites on the Sabbath Day (Exod. xxxv. 3), and therefore sticks could not have been wanted. Under these circumstances the transgression of the man was one peculiarly wilful and presumptuous, and one to which the penalty of presumption might naturally be awarded. (Numb. xv. 30, 31.) "But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." It took place in the wilderness, we are told, a very significant expression—in that very wilderness where the statute had been so authoritatively

promulgated, and with accompaniments which could not have slipped out of memory. It is said, indeed, that the Israelites did not know what was to be done to him. This, however, cannot mean that they were not aware that God had ordained the penalty of death. It must mean that they hesitated as to the question, Is *man* to execute the sentence, or will *God* take it into His own hands as He took that of Nadab and Abihu "for offering strange fire to the Lord?" (Lev. x. 1) or, supposing that man is to execute, how and in what manner is the sentence to be carried out? An appeal to the Almighty assigned death by stoning, and it was carried out. As to a similar sentence not being carried out afterwards, this makes no difference as to the guilt of the particular offender before us. God does not intimate, either by nature or by revelation, that He will always visit immediately or in exactly the same manner, though He will visit at length. He did visit the whole nation eventually for their Sabbath-breaking. We are told expressly that the Captivity should enable the land to enjoy her Sabbaths, *i.e.*, the Sabbaths of the seventh year, neglect of which crept in with neglect of the weekly Sabbath. Both phases of the transgression were visited together. (Lev. xxvi. 33, 34; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.)

The recentness of his charge, and the unmistakeable character of it, would also be reasons, I think, for the infliction of death on the man of God who came from Judah. He did not, indeed, know that death would be the penalty of his transgression, but he knew that he was doing what he was told not to do. He bore about with him a solemn message from God, which was accredited by occurrences of a very marvellous character—the withering of the king's hand, its restoration at his intercession, the rending of an idolatrous altar, and the pouring out of its ashes from it. Such a man knew or might have known that all eyes were upon him, that his God would be dishonoured by the inconsistency of his professions with his practice, and that no alleged revelation of God's will ought to weigh with him unless it were brought home to his mind in the same way as before. But he yielded easily, because to do so was in accordance with his feelings of fatigue. Hence his punishment; and, as in the case explained above, God may surely be permitted to determine when it is necessary, for the vindication of His honour, to visit offences in a manner which shall be exemplary to His people generally. It does not follow, be it remembered, that the Great and Righteous Judge cuts off for ever

from His presence those whom He mows down by temporal death. We cannot suppose that Josiah was finally lost, though he died in consequence of his neglect of God and in the very prosecution of it. (2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24.) So, we cannot suppose that this man of God from Judah was condemned eternally. The weighing of the careers of all—the adjudication according to their works to all—are matters suspended till the last day.

"Ananias and Sapphira were visited with death for a lie," says our objector. They were; and this is another instance in which we may surely allow the Almighty to determine whether His honour demanded such a method of visitation. Such, even with our limited knowledge, would seem to have been the case. The two offenders wished to gain extraordinary credit for self-sacrifice and disinterestedness, and yet to retain a portion of the wealth upon the abandonment of which that extraordinary credit should have depended. It was especially important that at the rise of the Christian religion the motives of its adherents should be above suspicion. If they were not, and if those who were specially commissioned to establish it were found unable to distinguish false metal from true, the whole edifice would be

endangered. Hence St. Peter was empowered to execute at once, and to its very letter, the terrible sentence which God ordinarily reserves to Himself, or delays, or imposes in some altered form. There would be a similar reason for Elisha's being empowered to inflict leprosy on Gehazi because of his lying and covetousness. The disinterestedness of the Prophet himself was in danger of being compromised by the venality of his follower. "Is it a time," was his indignant expostulation, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." The punishment of Gehazi was not the same, and was not apparently so severe, as was that of "the man of God from Judah" or of Ananias and Sapphira. But this much we are bound to believe, and may fairly believe—His *fault* was great, for Gehazi was not poor, and was not exposed to the temptation of want, and, moreover, committed his offence in the presence of miracles, which might have taught him better. But the obscurity of the man may have rendered no more signal visitation necessary. His

punishment, too, was great, though his life was spared. He was outwardly a perpetual monument of God's displeasure—loathsome to himself—loathed by others—the finger pointed at him—the word *unclean* pronounced of him, and his days were to be dragged out with bitter thoughts of the holy lessons he had neglected, and of the sorrow which he had entailed upon his descendants.

But this brings me to another point. It is obvious, even from Gehazi's case, that God does not requite sin merely by visiting the body of a man personally, but by the remorse which He causes him to experience in his spirit, because he has offended, or because he has made others offend, or because he has subjected others to temporal sorrows. If this be so, Uzziah, who was deposed from his royal position for his presumption, though he did not die, but suffered leprosy only, was surely and sorely punished. Bitter, very bitter, must have been his reflections, as from his "several house," to which his infirmity condemned him, he witnessed the majesty of his son and successor. If this be so, the spirit of David must have, indeed, been vexed within him, when those people whom he had endeavoured to "rule prudently with all his power," were devastated

by a pestilence. They might, perhaps, have partaken in his pride and vanity, but he had been the leader and prompter of their sin, and must have been regarded by them as the cause of their temporal sorrows. And though he may have seemed to have escaped without condign punishment for the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, was it nothing that he lost his child—nothing that his family was rent by intestine divisions—nothing that he was a fugitive from his throne—nothing that the sword never departed from his house—nothing that he was not counted worthy, because he "had shed much blood," to fulfil his life's desire of building a Temple to God? Was it nothing that he went down to the grave the penitent and heartstricken man which his own pathetic Psalms represent him to have been? He did not, indeed, die at once. God commuted his punishment, but that to which he was subjected was, nevertheless, a most real one. The cases of Solomon, of "the old prophet who dwelt in Bethel," and of Miriam and Aaron, were also instances, not of escape with impunity, but of commutation of punishment. For Solomon—he did not, indeed, die for his polygamy, and idolatry, and other grievous sins; but his latter days were vexed by adversaries, who were permitted

to rise against him, and by the prospect of the breaking up of the fabric of his kingdom. And, if we may believe that the Book of Ecclesiastes refers to himself, he went down in penitence to the grave. Was this no penalty to the man whose supremacy had been acknowledged from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and whose wisdom and glory distant sovereigns had travelled to witness? If he lived, it was the worn-out life of a sated voluptuary—convinced, we trust not too late, of the vanity of worldly things, when pursued without thought of God.

For "the old prophet of Bethel"—he was spared also, but for what? Surely to pass the short remainder of his days in remorse, with the sepulchre ever before him of the brother whom he had betrayed into transgression. Was this no penalty? Read the record of what he did, and of what he said, and then judge for yourselves: "And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre

wherein the man of God is buried: lay my bones beside his bones." (1 Kings xiii. 29—31.) For Miriam and Aaron—it did not seem good to God, either because they had done and suffered much for His sake, or because they were only temporarily overtaken by a fault to which He knew their hearts were averse, to visit them for their murmuring in the exact manner in which He visited the Israelites when *they* murmured. But was it no punishment for Miriam, "the prophetess,"—for her who had led the triumphant minstrelsy of her countrywomen, whom, in one place (Mic. vi. 4), God is declared to have sent, and by whom, in another place, He is said to have spoken (Numbers xii. 2), for her, who was doubtless honoured as the agent in preserving Moses himself from death in the Nile (Exod. ii. 4, 7, 8);—was it no punishment for her to be, even for a short time, a hideous specimen of living death? Was it no punishment for Aaron to feel that he was only spared for his office' sake a similar degradation? Then, afterwards, when Aaron again sinned in the matter of the Golden Calf, was it no punishment to him to be conscious how grievously he had fallen short of his duty, and to be bowed in agony of remorse, like that of David's, be-

cause the people whom he loved were destroyed in the Divine displeasure? It may be imagined also that it was, at least, some humiliation to Aaron to know that his exemption from death at that time was due to the intercession of Moses—of Moses, the very man against whom he had formerly murmured, and with whom he had considered himself co-ordinate. "The Lord," says Moses (Deut. ix. 20), "was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time." I should add that God may have had reasons, which we cannot fully fathom, but, perhaps, may partially guess at, for sparing for a season those whom He had called to be leaders of His people. Those men were recognized by Israel, and recognized by Israel's enemies, as of His appointment. And He may have borne with them lest His cause should be discredited. This is intimated by the plea offered by Moses in arrest of God's vengeance upon Israel generally,—"Now, if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness." (Numbers xiv. 15, 16.) And it is further intimated

in Saul's petition to Samuel, and in Samuel's compliance with it:—"Then he said, I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the Lord." (1 Samuel xv. 30, 31.) The prophet was doubtless instructed that Saul's present rejection from God's spiritual comforts, and the disasters which were eventually to overtake him and his house, were sufficient to vindicate the Divine honour, and that it was not necessary to humiliate openly the successful leader of God's hosts.

As for the objection that punishment does not always light on the main offenders, two replies may be made to it. In the first place, we are in no sort adequate judges how far the people are partakers in the sins of their leaders. Sometimes we have no information given us upon this point, as in the instances of the people suffering when David's numbering took place. But sometimes we have information given us. This is so, notably, in Exod. xxxii. 1—"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and

said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." And again in Exod. xxxii. 35—"And the Lord plagued the people, because *they made* the Calf, which Aaron made." It is evident from these passages, both that the people originated the transgression alluded to, and that God regarded them as having had, at least, a very appreciable participation in it. But we have a principle, recollect, which will cover a great deal of ground. God's administration is not bounded by this life; and it does not follow that, because one man's mortal span is cut short while that of another is prolonged, their cases will eventually exhibit any unfairness of treatment. The Great Administrator will take into consideration everything connected with the inner biography and the outward career of each and all, and requite each and all according to their works.

By this principle, also, even the comparative inequality of the sentences upon Uzziah and Uzzah, which has been much insisted upon, may be defended. We may grant, if you please, that one was allowed to live, though in humiliation and sorrow; that the other was at

once struck dead; though in either case the offence was a breaking of an indifferent or ceremonial precept. We may grant, if you please, that Uzziah, who was an educated man and a king, should have known his duty more thoroughly than could Uzzah, a peasant; though it is to be remarked that Uzzah could not have been ignorant of the sacredness of the ark; how retention of it had been the occasion of diseases to the Philistines; how looking into it had been visited with slaughter from the Lord in the case of the men of Bethshemesh. We may grant that Uzziah's sin was deliberate; that of Uzzah momentary; though again the circumstances alluded to should have taught Uzzah his duty. We may grant that the vindication of the ark, as the throne of God's visible presence, when it had long been dishonoured, seems to imply a public reason why Uzzah should have been summarily punished, while Uzziah, in days when the ark was honoured, was spared. I say we may grant all this temporal inequality. Still the future life will remain as a corrective of all that seems inexplicable here; and it may be better *there* with Uzzah, though for his momentary irreverence he was suddenly removed from earth, than for Uzziah, who, having

committed a deliberate fault, was spared for repentance; for we are not told that he did repent.

I have but one word in conclusion. Obedience to God's known will is the condition of Man's life in this world. Disobedience to His known will is an infraction of that condition. It does not matter how His will is known. He may have given an intimation of it from within; he may have given an intimation of it from without; but in either case transgression of it involves death. True it is that He suspends or modifies or commutes that sentence in many cases, in His great mercy, and in consideration for the weakness of His creatures; and, blessed be His Holy Name, true it is, also, that He has provided an Atonement for the eternal wages of sin, both for those who, aware of it, will accept it, and for those who, not having known of it, have obeyed the law of their mind. True it is, again, that He has established that canon of gracious allowance for want of opportunities which appears in the Epistle to the Romans (ii., 12—16), and from which it is certain that persons will only be judged by their conformity to or neglect of the standard which they have had means of knowing. But, contemporaneously with His

merciful consideration for sinners, He carries on His moral government and He retains and exercises the right to use punishment as a means of vengeance as well as a corrective—to foreshadow things to come—to forestall in a manner part of what is to come. We cannot, indeed, discover His whole system; but we may see part of it; we may find reasons for some of His arrangements; and this we have endeavoured to do to-day. For the rest, we must humbly confess our ignorance, and bow the head submissively when He says, "Hear now, O house of Israel, are not My ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" (Ezek. xviii. 29.)

LECTURE VII.

LUKE ix. 54, 55.

"Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

"But He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

A BOOK has been lately published, the tendency of which, whatever judgment may eventually be formed of the author's design, is to prove that Christianity is an impracticable scheme, and that it is shown to be so by human experience. It therefore seems imperatively to demand notice at the hands of the Christian apologist, especially as it has obtained some notoriety, and has reached its third edition.

The book assumes the form of a biography, the subject of which is a man, who, from first to last, is supposed to be acting upon thoroughly earnest Christian principles, or, at any rate, to be wishing to act upon them.

The result appears to be this:—

If this man's views of Christianity were correct, and if he was perfectly Christ-like in the way in which he set them forth, we are to

be induced to admit one of the following inferences:—Either Christianity itself must be a mistake and must forthwith be abandoned as a scheme unsuitable to the present day, or the Christianity of the present day is not in accordance with the preaching and the life of its Founder, and so requires to be reformed and remodelled, and, as a last resort, by the particular means suggested. In other words, either the example, which Christ left us that we should follow in His steps, is one utterly incompatible with, and inapplicable to, humanity—certainly to humanity in the nineteenth century; or, humanity has mistaken what Christ was, and what Christ intended, so completely, that a thorough breaking through of its existing maxims and a thorough breaking up of its existing complications is necessary. The alternative is a fearful one. It seems to be either an elimination of Christianity, even in theory, from society, or, in pursuit of a possible Christianity, an introduction of such a state of things as experience has shown to be subversive of *all* Christianity.

Observe, however, that it is only on the hypothesis that this *soi-disant* Christian, thus pourtrayed, was well informed and judicious as well as sincere and earnest; that is, if his

theoretical and practical views were correct, that one of these momentous results must ensue. That hypothesis I shall endeavour to show to be inadmissible. If I succeed in doing this, though it will not, indeed, follow that Christianity is to be maintained or that society is in a perfect state, and needs no regeneration, thus much will have been gained: a particular assault, (for, whether intended as such or no, this is an assault,) will have been repulsed, and objectors will be compelled to seek other methods of assault, if they wish to do so.

I will now commence my task, merely repeating what I said at first, that I am not at this moment concerned with the design of the author of the book to which I have been alluding, but with the tendency of what I find in its pages. I should be very loth to pronounce, previously to examination, that it is mischievously intended. There is much of what is noble and self-devoted and self-restrained in the hero; and there is no doubt that the bewilderment in which he is made to try one scheme after another, and to adopt one phase of belief after another, exhibits a mind on the part of his biographer which is in itself a psychological study of no mean interest. But the book contains a large number of mistaken

assumptions, theological, moral, and political; and these, being completely interwoven into a fascinating and sensational narrative, are likely, unless they are exposed, to gain acceptance together with the narrative. On a principle, then, analogous to "vice is most dangerous when divested of its coarseness," one ought to be especially jealous of error when it is presented in an embellished guise or with accompaniments that attract the heart.

Joshua Davidson is the name by which the hero of the book is introduced to the reader, who is invited to interest himself in his fortunes and to draw a moral from them. He is the son of a carpenter in the North of Cornwall, and in a remote and obscure district of that county. His connections are humble, and strictly in keeping with his father's calling. Traditions, faintly whispered, point indeed to some genealogical relations with the legendary monarch, Arthur, the ruins of whose castle, Tintagel, are in the neighbourhood. But these do not appreciably affect the general tone of the family, or even light up the cottage where *Joshua* was born. His nursery and mere childish days are marked with no outwardly striking incidents; but he evinces very early a depth of character which almost awes his

parents, especially his mother. He has a purity of heart and a thoughtfulness upon Scripture subjects, and a desire to imitate Christ and to see Him imitated by others, which are rarely found in children. And, as might be expected, he is somewhat puzzled at discovering that Christians about him do not bear the exact stamp of Christ which he had been led to anticipate. He takes Scripture to be applicable to Man's life and actions in the most simple and literal sense. He holds every Christian to be bound, in right of his calling, to act personally as Christ acted; to relieve those whom he thinks Christ would have relieved, irrespectively of any merit or demerit in those relieved; to rebuke those classes and those men whose assumed prototypes in the New Testament Christ rebuked; to work, in proof of his own mission to himself, and in attestation of it to others, miracles such as Christ either wrought or promised that those who preached Him should be able to work. These principles, deeply brooded over, soon bring him into difficulties. At fourteen years of age, being catechized in the parish church, he proposes as questions to his vicar,—why he (the vicar) does not embrace voluntary poverty, and why he does not improve the condition of certain

miserable though not very deserving poor,—suggests that an infidel, whom he names, who has helped a vicious woman in her distress, has more of the spirit of Christ than the orthodox teacher—that this infidel is like the second son in the Parable, who said he would not do his Lord's will when he was ordered, but who did it all the same eventually, and, by inference, that the vicar was like the former. Of course his simplicity is taken for impertinence—his zeal for presumption—he is scouted and driven back into himself; but he perseveres in his attempt to live his imagined life of Christ. Though he has failed in his public attempt to work upon his superiors to do so, he finds some favour with his equals in age and station; he exercises by his love, and forbearance, and truthfulness, and purity, a strong influence upon these; and though he abandons all resort to Church ordinances, all resort to Christ's ministers, whom he likens to the Jewish Priests and the Pharisees, and denounces accordingly, he is constant in prayer both by himself and with the little band that he has gathered round him. He has faith in Christ, though not in man, and believes both that he is living after Christ's pattern, and may fairly look for signs that he is to re-christianize the world. The

Scriptures seem to promise this. Those who were told to "preach the Gospel to every creature," and who, according to his view, represent not a distinct ministry, but every one who is a believer, are encouraged in the following terms: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matt. xvii. 20, 21.) And again, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) Well, he fasts and prays, and accompanied by three of his most devoted followers, (one of them named John, who is his biographer,) goes in the twilight to a place called the Rocky Valley, and commands a huge stone "to move in God's name, and because Christ had promised" such an event to the word of faith. There was none that answered. "The rock stood still." "At another time he took up a viper in his hand." The beast stung him, and he was ill for days

after. At another, he ate a handful of the berries of the black briony, and all but died of the poison. By such miscarriages his conviction that he is to imitate Christ and His Apostles in exercising miraculous powers is rudely shaken. Scripture cannot, he finds, be taken literally, so far as this point is concerned. Still, Christ is to be obeyed and to be imitated in His efforts to bring the world to purity, to brotherly love, to equality of condition, and the like. He has been mistaken in one point, but he feels that he cannot be mistaken here. For a time he labours on in the country, enduring much provocation, and only on one occasion, (when he probably justified himself by Christ's example and by that of St. Paul,) exhibiting anger in return. He makes various abortive attempts to do good, and especially to reclaim a drunken and worthless woman, whom he commits to his mother's care. At length he comes up to the larger world in London. Here, a strange change has come over him, with the abandonment of a belief as to the promise of miraculous powers being perpetual. He gives up belief in the Atonement; in the Divinity of our Lord, and, of course, in the duty and efficacy of prayer to Him; in His provision of the wants of the future; in His perfect knowledge, whether of Nature or of

Man. In fact, though he admits the existence of a God, he accepts the Scriptures only so far as they represent the Man Christ Jesus as a sharer in, and an alleviator of, to the extent of His power, the miseries and inequalities of humanity. Such a man, and such literally, will *Joshua* be. He will live with the poor, and sympathize with them—with the vicious or morally leprous, the drunkard, the harlot, the profligate, and endeavour to heal and reclaim them by teaching them self-respect and better pursuits; he will disregard the gibes, and insults, and contempt of the unsympathizing, be pure amid the impure, be contented in the face of riches, be humble in the face of provocation, be sanguine of eventual success, though often disappointed. Was not Christ all this? Did not Christ enjoin all this? Shall not *Joshua* be like Him? Shall not, through *Joshua's* example and exertions, the days come when liberty, fraternity, and equality, which he interprets to be the sum of Christ's practical Gospel, prevail?

It is impossible, though it would be interesting, to follow *Joshua* through his struggles, his self-denial, his philanthropic labours amid the worst part of the worst population of the worst end of London. Suffice it to say,

that with a single exception,—the reclamation of a poor Magdalen, whom, in defiance of popular opinion, he takes into his house and cares for,—he is, from whatever reason, utterly unsuccessful in his attempt at a reproduction of what he believes to be the Man Christ in the bad world around him. He is suspected as a consorter with the vicious, imprisoned as a harbourer of rogues and vagabonds, assaulted and plundered by a drunken thief whom he had tried to reclaim; even those who sympathize with him for a time, are "bye and bye offended," and "walk no more with him." Except, I say, for the touching episode of the Magdalen, and for the ray of encouragement which her pure simple love gives him, his second attempt is a failure. He cannot bring about what he believes to be the true practical Gospel, by his presentation of what he calls the moral life of Christ.

It is a failure, I repeat, and no wonder that it is so. Having deserted Revealed Religion, and its aids and doctrines, as a whole, the fragment which he retains is not sufficient for his purpose. His creed is mainly that of Natural Religion, with the addition that he accepts as a model, One, Whom, at his first endeavour to imitate Him, he considered to be Divine, but Whom he now considers to be human, like him-

self. The prestige of that Being's character remains—so far as he understands it. Thus he imitates Him, for a time. But, as the Being is merely human, His views may have been short-sighted or defective, and so require to be recast. *Joshua* will recast them. He does so, after the manner following, which represents the final phase of his career:

He begins to speculate whether Christ may not be *translated*, though his rendering seems an extraordinary way of *translating* Him. And his speculation takes this form: Christ, were He living in these days, would establish a communistic Gospel first, seeing that the Apostles were, immediately after His ascension, so he reads the Scripture, communists—and then all the moral and spiritual benefits of Christianity would follow. So he gradually though not entirely, withdraws himself from private efforts—and becomes a public lecturer against every existing organization of society, economic, ecclesiastical, financial, political. He denounces capital—he joins the Workman's International Union, and at length goes over to Paris, and scruples not to associate himself with the vilest of mankind, why? because the movement appears, detestable as are the means employed, to be likely to promote the end which

he has in view. How his own purer spirit could reconcile itself to partaking in such iniquity we are not told. We are only told that in the end he was disappointed, that he was well nigh disheartened, that his faithful Magdalen was brutally shot as a *pétroleuse*, that his companion John was almost murdered, that he himself returned to England. Here he again preached his communistic gospel, and again endured all sorts of insult and hardship. He fought against what he called the caste of wealth, the caste of priestly influence, the caste of capital, the caste of education, the caste of patronage, and the like. At length he died, what we are, I suppose, to consider, a martyr to the truth, the victim of an excited struggle provoked by his communistic preaching.

Such is the story of *Joshua;* and, as I have said above, we are intended to learn from the incidents in it, and especially from the catastrophe, that, if his preaching were true, either Christianity is impracticable in the present day, or, that a different state of Christian society must be looked forward to and striven for, the present state of it being hopelessly averse to Christianity.

But, to turn from the dream to the interpretation.

I must first remark upon a very painful circumstance. The life and death of *Joshua Davidson* seem to be a sort of parody—I do not use the word offensively—of the life and death of Christ. Jesus or Joshua (the Saviour) the Son of David according to the flesh, the reputed son of a carpenter, born in obscurity, yet of a family tracing a royal descent, and with His ancestors' fortress in the vicinity of His birthplace, and with a mother pondering His sayings in her heart, is not obscurely adumbrated by our hero. And, (though misunderstood, and indeed travestied, by the scene in the church and the dispute with the vicar,) Christ in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, "both hearing them and asking them questions," is also brought before us. He Who up to thirty years of age wrought at Joseph's calling; Who rejected, more or less, the teachers of His day; Who consorted with John the Evangelist and two others especially; Who lived with and did good to those of humble means, or ill name, or distress of body or mind; Who was persecuted for what He did; and eventually suffered death at the hands of persecutors—is the Figure Whom we are to have before us; and Who, indeed, is continually rising to our view. And throughout, except in

the awful transactions at Paris, there is just enough of external likeness to Christ to interest the reader; and, unless he is warned of the points in which the external likeness fails, and of the essential dissimilarity between the God-Man and the mere man, just enough to lead to an unwary reception of the doctrines which the work inculcates.

And now having noted the points of resemblance, let me note the points of dissimilarity.

Christ was one and the same throughout His ministry. He was inaugurated by a miracle *acted upon* Him at His baptism, and undoubted testimony was borne to the reality of the occurrence. There was and there could be no mistake as to the cleft heavens, the descending Spirit, the Voice from on high. Shortly afterwards He was an *agent in* a miracle. And this also was testified to by those who were at the feast of Cana, by the servants who waited, by the master of the entertainment. All the other miracles which accompanied His career, whether acted in reference to Him and on Him, as the Transfiguration, as the strengthening in His agony, or the Temple's rent veil; or wrought by Him, as the feeding of multitudes, or the healing the sick, or the walking the waters, or the raising the dead; were not failures, were

not tentative efforts, but successes. So was it not with *Joshua*—he fails, and his failure is patent to all.

And contemporaneously, be it observed, Christ was uniform throughout in His moral treatment of men. From the first He began to inculcate His doctrines, (what they were we shall discuss presently,) that man should cultivate a higher life than was then prevalent in Judea—higher in respect to a man's self, higher in respect to His brethren. And, as I have said, He was accompanied by credentials to His mission, which gave Him an authority, and which did not desert Him to the very end, insomuch that the centurion seeing the earthquake and the things which were done, said, Surely this was a righteous man, surely this was the Son of God. With *Joshua* it was otherwise, he does not carry on his pretension to miraculous power, and only takes up his exclusively moral mission, as a vocation of life, after he has affected miraculous power, and failed to establish his pretensions to it.

To this it should be added, that there is nothing in the life of Christ which presents the remotest likeness to the latter career of *Joshua*. To produce such a likeness we must imagine Him associating Himself with some of the Jewish

factionaries of the day, the followers of Judas of Galilee, for instance, in order to get rid of what was deemed oppression; or, if He did not do this, He must be supposed to have assented to His disciples' desire to make Him a king, in order that He might spread those doctrines by force which He found that moral suasion and even miraculous credentials were only too gradually introducing to society; or, at least, He must have accepted, (instead of repudiating, as we know He did,) that proposal to rectify a financial inequality, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." (Luke xii. 13.) But we find Him doing nothing of the sort. His profession is from first to last, "My kingdom is not of this world." It is one which is to reign in men's hearts. "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is My kingdom not from hence." (John xviii. 36.) Christ said in effect, Though I believe Myself to be the introducer of a state of things which men will not have at present, far be it from Me to establish it with violence. This was not the policy of *Joshua*. Defective as was his own view of Christ's morality, of which we shall speak hereafter, could anything be more inconsistent with

his personal purity, his self-denial, his non-resistance to evil, than to consort with the sort of men who composed the mass of the French communists? If to do so is to *translate* Christ, to adapt Christ to modern times, we are indeed ignorant what *translation* and adaptation mean. The language of *Joshua* may be paralleled by that of Shakspere's *Orlando:*

> "Forbear and eat no more. . . .
> Forbear I say,
> He dies that touches any of this fruit
> Till I and my affairs be answered."
> *As You Like It*, Act ii., Scene 7.

But this is scarcely a *translation* of His language, Who, when the people of a Samaritan village would not receive Him and His disciples, neither took vengeance, nor allowed it to be taken: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke ix. 55, 56.)

The excuse, however, which is given by *Joshua's* biographer for this extraordinary *translation* is, that the Christ of Scripture would, in the present day, be an anachronism and a mistake. These are the biographer's own words:—

"Which will you take, Christianity as final or as relative in its methods? If final, then

Jesus Christ among us now as He was in Judea—a vagrant preacher living by charity, denouncing the rich and the powerful *quâ* rich and powerful, calling on men to think only of saving their own souls, and urging on them indifference to the things of this world, and the means of honest living—would do more harm than good. Neither would He be an educated man. The Christ of Judea was eminently unlearned, and His knowledge of physical nature was neither in advance of His own time nor equal to ours. Yet, if all that He said and did was final both in method and degree, then we must suppose that God chose the exact point of perfected human development, physical and mental, for His Incarnation; and that a Nazarene Jew, who was shown by the Devil all the kingdoms of the world from the top of a high mountain, and who could cast out devils from men into swine, was the ultimate of manhood the world had seen or could ever see. But if the future man is to be superior to the present, the Saviour will have appeared under conditions as much below those reached by that future man as ours are beyond an Aztec's or a Bushman's. On all these counts, and more that could be added, I think we must give up the absolute identity of being and action were

Christ to appear now, and go back on the theory of relative methods." *

It is painful to quote a passage at once so irreverent in its tone, and so replete with mistakes. Though Christ was, indeed, humanly speaking, uneducated and unlearned, He was also, as I showed in the Fifth Lecture of my Second Series, as God the Creator, omniscient. Though Christ was poor, it was by His own choice, for He could feed others, but would not feed Himself. Though Christ was not girt about with this world's warriors, there were those, as St. Peter, who would willingly, at His faintest prompting, have taken up arms in His behalf, and He might have had more than twelve legions of angels at His command. Yet, He who was all this, is supposed by the biographer to be capable of *translation* into a leader of the lawless hordes of the Commune! His disciples, of course—those men who, when they came, at length, to understand the true nature of His mission, rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake—were to be capable of forming such lawless hordes! If this were so, what was to have prevented Him, when His moral treatment of society appeared to fail, from

* Letter of the biographer in the *Spectator*, April 12, 1873.

assuming the conqueror or the devastator—in fact, from doing evil, that a supposed good might come? Why, Mahomet, who spent three years in making fourteen proselytes, and who had failed even to convert Mecca in ten years, and who *then* put on the warrior, might as well be considered *a translation* of Christ as *Joshua*, "whose Christianity, at last, is Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, protected by grapeshot, if need be." Again I am quoting the biographer's own words.* They are singularly in accordance with Gibbon's description of Mahomet's address to his scanty band of early followers, and of the response which he received from one of them. "Friends and kinsmen," said Mahomet, "I offer you, and I alone can offer, the most precious of gifts, the treasures of this world and of the world to come. God has commanded me to call you to His service. Who among you will support my burthen? Who among you will be my companion and vizir?" No answer was returned, till the silence of astonishment, and doubt, and contempt was at length broken by the impatient courage of Ali, a youth in the fourteenth year of his age. "O, prophet, I am the man:

* Letter of the biographer in the *Spectator*, April 12, 1873.

whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O, prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." "Mahomet," continues the historian, "accepted his offer with transport."*

Several grand fallacies lie at the root of *Joshua Davidson's* life—these both affected his imitation of Christ, and caused him, at length, to resort to the outrageous procedure which is called *translating* Christ.

He mistook the tendency of Christ's moral utterances, and imagined that they were to be applied baldly and literally to society, instead of being mainly personal.

He supposed these utterances, which he calls moral and social principles, to be curative, if worked out by individuals, of all the evils of society.

He so far blinded himself as to what are really moral and social principles, as to imagine that when they have failed to gain acceptance, by quiet means, they may be enforced by violent means, which contradict them in every sense of the word.

He mistook the nature of Christ's teaching in reference to the regeneration of society, *i.e.* he considered that His object was merely to relieve

* Gibbon, chap. l.

misery and poverty, not to abolish sin. He mistook Christ in making Him a mere man. Coincidently with this, he mistook the Scriptures generally, imagining that he was at liberty to choose certain points for his guidance to the rejection of others, and thus violating the due proportion of the faith (*ἀναλογίαν πίστεως*).

He mistook society, and so despaired of it.

He mistook himself.

These fallacies run more or less into each other, but they all spring out of that first mentioned, around which, therefore, I shall group what I have to say further.

He mistook the tendency of Christ's moral utterances, and imagined that they were to be applied baldly and literally to society instead of being mainly personal.

This point, you will recollect, I discussed to a certain extent in the Fifth Lecture of my First Series. I observed there that every man has two capacities, a personal and a social, or in other words, a private and a public capacity. I went on to remark that although he is indeed to nourish these precepts in his heart, and to manifest them in his conduct so far as he can, he must, if he has merely common sense, see that if they were carried out literally, society could not go on. This I illustrated by reference

to the two precepts, "I say unto you that ye resist not evil," and, "Charity thinketh no evil." If these were accepted in the letter, I said, "Men would be at the disposal of the very worst of their kind: the gentle of the violent, the undesigning and unsuspicious of the plotter, the industrious of the idle; but," I went on to say, "Would this state of things be *society* at all? Does not that word imply a governing and controlling power, a relation and correlation of every part, a protection of the weak against the strong, an assurance of the rights of property, an enforcement of the duty of self-maintenance, a discountenancing of the indolent and aggressor, a surveillance over those whose characters afford grounds for suspicion? And must not the carrying out of such functions be entrusted to some one who, in carrying them out, must divest himself in a great measure, and by doing violence to his private feelings, of the tempers described? . . . It is necessarily so. In the case of war, harsh deeds, unjustifiable in time of peace, must be performed and allowed. So, in their public capacity, men have to suppress to a considerable extent, the tenderness, the gentleness, the unsuspiciousness, which, as private persons, they feel bound to entertain. Their object of course

is, eventually, to leaven society with the tone which should pervade the individual soul. Hence we see that the first of the precepts to which allusion has been made, though couched in general terms, refers primarily to the individual, as strictly such. In their capacity of private persons men should be ready to suffer hurt rather than to inflict it, to give way rather than to be aggressive,* to be unsuspicious rather than to believe that those about them are on the watch for occasions to injure them. But everybody has a duty to the whole body as well as to himself. A man cannot, and he dares not, suppose that if an injury is committed on himself, this injury will be the only instance in which the aggressor, if left unnoticed or unpunished, will infringe upon his neighbour's rights. Therefore, though he nourishes no private feelings of revenge, and internally forgives and even pities the offender, he is obliged to sink self in regard to the safety of

* Compare Plato, *Gorgias*, c. 24:

ΠΩΛ. Ἦ που ὅ γε ἀποθνήσκων ἀδίκως ἐλεεινός τε καὶ ἄθλιός ἐστιν; ΣΩ. Ἧττον ἢ ὁ ἀποκτιννύς, ὦ Πῶλε, καὶ ἧττον ἢ ὁ δικαίως ἀποθνήσκων. ΠΩΛ. Πῶς δῆτα, ὦ Σώκρατες; ΣΩ. Οὕτως, ὡς μέγιστον τῶν κακῶν τυγχάνει ὂν τὸ ἀδικεῖν. ΠΩΛ. Ἦ γὰρ τοῦτο μέγιστον; οὐ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι μεῖζον; ΣΩ. Ἥκιστά γε. ΠΩΛ. Σὺ ἄρα βούλοιο ἂν ἀδικεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ἀδικεῖν; ΣΩ. Βουλοίμην μὲν ἂν ἔγωγε οὐδέτερα · εἰ δ' ἀναγκαῖον εἴη ἀδικεῖν ἢ ἀδικεῖσθαι, ἑλοίμην ἂν μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθαι ἢ ἀδικεῖν.

the community. And so again, as to the second precept, about 'thinking no evil,' a man does not suppose everyone whom he meets to be inclined to rob him; and if he does not leave his property unguarded, or his house open, this is not because he imagines this or that particular person to be ready to take advantage of his negligence. He believes evil of no particular man, until the conviction is forced upon him. But for the sake of society in general, he is bound to be careful against the evil which he knows to exist in it, and which, by negligence, he would foster and encourage instead of preventing."

The subject now before us gives me an opportunity, and indeed enforces upon me the duty, of extending the scope of the above remarks. *Joshua Davidson* forgot, or he never knew, that there is a very important distinction to be made between those who are thoroughly permeated by Christian influences and those who simply bear the Christian name. Those who come under the former class will, indeed, in their personal conduct, endeavour to carry out the precepts of Christ. They will not be ready to take offence. They will hope all good things of their neighbours. They will be ready to impart of such things as they have. They will not

be over-anxious for the morrow. They will not trust in riches. They will consider what they have to be a treasure entrusted to them for which they will have to give an account. But they will carry out these precepts with something like regard to the general bearing of the Gospel. They will be aware that there are other parts of Scripture besides those which are sometimes quoted as forming the whole of a Christian's duty. That Scripture inculcates personal labour as well as personal almsgiving—that it denounces those who will not work, saying that if they will not, they are not to eat—that it proposes an Apostle, nay, even the Saviour Himself, as an example that one must labour with one's own hands—that it speaks of the repression and punishment of dangerous persons, and that it recognises the existence of rich as well as of poor, for otherwise, how could almsgiving be possible? That it implies that some will be rich capitalists, or proprietors of land, or masters of numerous households, for otherwise, how could there be persons trading with entrusted money, or labourers in vineyards, or servants waiting at meat?

Again, they will carry them out with something like regard to the spirit in which they were uttered, and not to the mere letter.

They will recollect that as the parable is an imperfect form of conveying heavenly truths, lowered for the time to the intelligence of the hearer, so precepts in the concrete form, "If any man take away thy coat," &c., are husks of which the fruit, *i.e.*, the abstract principles, must be sought within. If more than an abstract truth were intended, *i.e.*, if it were meant that a person were to be allowed to take his neighbour's property, it is obvious that an opposition would be at once set up to the precepts, "Thou shall not steal," "Thou shalt do no violence," and the like. Men would be encouraged to break through and trample upon one of the first principles by which society is held together. It does not follow that, because at a certain age of the world the concrete form of delivering precepts was most appropriate and was best understood that, therefore, the mere terms of that concrete form, must, through an idolizing of the letter, be accepted in their baldest sense for ever.

Thirdly, they will read them and what are considered to be the practical comments upon them, derivable from other parts of Scripture, with something like regard to the facts of the case. For instance, they will see that though Christ rebuked the uncharitable rich—the rich

who set their hearts upon their wealth, as though it would last for ever—though He warned them that it was very hard to disengage themselves from the temptation to rest upon it, He never spoke of them as sinning from the mere fact of possessing it, or suggested that it was a good deed to abolish the caste of wealth altogether. They will see, again, that though the Apostles and their immediate followers be admitted to have had all things in common, this was merely a transient circumstance, not a precept of obligation. They were partners in a common enterprize—the spreading of the Gospel—and as is the case with partners in other enterprizes, what each had was merged in one common store, for convenience' sake. No one was bound to be literally one of their partnership, or to contribute all his possessions to it. Ananias was expressly told, "Whilst it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold was it not in thine own power?" He was punished, not for withholding a part, but for hypocritically pretending that, while he gave a part, he was giving the whole. Zacchæus did not profess to give more than half of his goods to the poor. St. Paul does not enforce upon his correspondents the duty of giving up everything, but merely that of being ready to

minister to the necessities of those whose cases might be from time to time brought before them.

Fourthly, they will read them with something like common sense, and common prudence, and regard to the common weal.

With common sense. They know that if persons find they can live upon the work of others, instead of upon that of their own hands, they are sure to do so. They will, therefore, argue that it is impossible to found on a large scale a society in which there is to be a common stock, unless there are also instituted a compulsory obligation for all to work, an undisputed understanding what the work of each is to be, and a provision that, as all cannot work in the same way, none is to envy his neighbour or assert that that neighbour's work is easier than his own.

With common prudence. They know that if they were to give indiscriminately they would give so as to do no good. If they gave to a drunkard, for instance, the gift would be spent in drink; if they gave to the idle they would encourage the idle class, and foster all the evils to which idleness proverbially gives birth; if they gave to the threatening, or to the habitual mendicant, they would foster the

very plagues and curses which thwart and stifle true benevolence and genuine Christianity.

And, accordingly, with regard to the common weal. They know that if dissipation, if idleness, if violence, if imposture are allowed to go unchecked, and much more if they are practically encouraged, the whole tide of human passions which is at present kept in somewhat due channels would burst upon and destroy society. That the weak would be the prey of the strong, the simple of the unwary, and that, (for impunity is a vigorous infectant,) brute force would soon prevail; that the very virtues which Christianity supposes, of obedience, of contentedness, of humility, of liberality, of consideration for others, would find no field for exercise. Therefore, they are obliged to repress evildoers; and,—alas! so far is Christianity from having at present leavened the mass of those who are called Christians,—to repress by the strong motive of fear, those who will not be restrained by love—in a word, to acknowledge the fact that there are those in the midst of them to whom Christian precepts cannot, in their literal sense, be applied.

Joshua Davidson did not see this. He took the utterances of Christ to be precise codes of law for the whole world, not vehicles of

principles—and then, forgetting that men are to act, not merely as individuals, but as members of a body—he considered himself bound to exhibit their working unaided. This miserably narrow interpretation made him both uncharitably misconstrue the motives of others, and isolate or nearly isolate himself, in his endeavours to attack and conquer the confessed evils of society. He could not understand that society must protect itself as a rule against the vicious, the aggressive, the idle classes; and that unless as a rule also, it discriminates between the poor who have become such through the faults implied in the names of these classes, and the meritorious poor, it must foster evils which will be its destruction. He shut his eyes to the fact that combinations voluntary or provided by law, exist already in great numbers, for making the discrimination required. That these, whether they take the form of the Church's care, or of poor laws, or of charitable organizations, or of hospitals, or of infirmaries, or of refuges, or of alms houses, or of orphanages, or of schools, or of regulations about labour in mines and factories, or of emigration societies and the like, are really acknowledgments of the Gospel principles, and attempts to carry out these principles, with a regard at once

to the real benefit of the persons relieved, and to the protection of the persons relieving against imposture. And that if there are those who wish to be engaged in ministrations amongst the poor, the wretched, and the oppressed, they may always find associations in which such yearnings may find vent, and their energies find a field for exercise. Whereas isolated, ill-directed exertions, must end, as his ended, in disappointment, and perhaps in that revulsion of feeling which inclines persons to pull down the edifice which they find themselves unable to restore unaided. Had he been acquainted with history, he would have known that the doles of monasteries, the maintenance of a crowd of idle retainers, the fancies of Owenism did more evil than good. Had he taken the trouble to make inquiries into the state of things around him, he would have found both how much good was being effected by combination, and how much evil by the want of it, even now. But he did not do this—with an amiable quixotry he set out to abolish poverty, and misery, and oppression single handed, and he failed.

I have called this quixotry amiable. To a certain extent it was so; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that he was not merely igno-

rant of the principles of political economy, and of the true application of the utterances of Christ, but, as I have said before, uncharitable in his estimate of what is being done already to alleviate the evils the existence of which kindled his soul within him. This is one serious flaw in his moral character. There are also others. He is, while possessed with an overwhelming sense of what individual Christian men ought to do, unhappily destitute of true dependence upon Him, without Whose aid no Christian man can do anything as he ought. He imitates Christ, as he thinks, but he does not pray to Christ for power to do so. He does not even believe Christ to be God, or to be sending down His Holy Spirit to aid those who entreat of Him ability to carry out their desire to be like Him. Inconsistently enough he abandons the essential doctrines of those very Scriptures, without access to which he never could have heard of Christ at all. With utter desertion of humility, he conceives himself to be capable of selecting for himself what he will admit in matters of faith, what points in Christ he will imitate. In fact, he makes himself *a Christ.*

A Christ, I have said, but what sort of Christ? A Christ without Divinity, a Christ whose office

it is supposed to be to struggle merely against misery, not to abolish sin. Against sin, as such, *Joshua Davidson* makes no assaults. Hence he separates himself from the Church whose province it is to carry out Christ's warfare against sin, to leaven society with her Master's Spirit, and so eventually, if not to abolish, yet to mitigate sorrow. She has not done so, as yet, he says mournfully, as he contemplates misery. She can never do so, he goes on to say, ignorantly. Then follow various corollaries which to his own mind he seems to deduce fairly. Christ, having been a mere man, founded an institution which may have done very well for a small society, with very good maxims, and with a very good end in view. But as the end, liberty, fraternity, and equality, has not been attained by those good maxims, *I*, *Joshua*, feel myself free to attain the end, *quocunque modo*, even by contradicting for a time every one of the maxims which Christ laid down, and by associating myself with those whose characters are utterly the reverse of His. I may do evil that good may come. *This is but to translate Christ.*

A wondrous *translation*, indeed; and, setting aside the unconscious blasphemy of it, as applied to our blessed Saviour, I cannot help

observing that it has *translated Joshua* himself. He who, at the commencement of his career, would do no wrong to any man, and would not know a wicked person, except to endeavour to reclaim him, at last will associate himself with the very scum of mankind; will elevate one class by the plunder or murder of another; will imagine society going on well in the hands of those, many of whom he knows to be its very pests and destroyers.

Yet to this we are conducted by the fiction which I have been examining. And I have undertaken so ungracious a task, not as one scorning, God forbid, self-sacrifice, forbearance, patience, endurance of contradiction, and other like qualities with which, in the pages of the fiction, *Joshua* is invested. My reasons have been far different. I have wished to show, *First*, that the precepts of Christ, though, if wrongly understood, they appear to inculcate a Christianity not practicable in the present day, are not really contradictory to human experience. *Secondly*, that imitation of Christ, even in His supposed moral transactions as a man, cannot be safely separated from a recollection that He was God, and that He is God, ready to send His Spirit to them that ask Him. *Thirdly*, that the disseverance of the imitation

from that recollection, as it proceeds from want of worldly knowledge, and from want of self-knowledge, so it leads to lamentable mistakes of conduct, to misapprehension of the wants and temper of society, and may eventually issue in a temper utterly the reverse of the temper of Christ. And *lastly*, that, as the fiction does not lead to either of the results first supposed, that Christianity was a mistake at the outset, or that society has wrongly interpreted it; so, it does not lead to the further result, that society, having wrongly interpreted it, must be brought to the particular *translation* of Christ which the Commune aimed at, and by the means through which that aim was compassed. On the contrary, I urge that the fiction leads to this: *First*, that there must be something intrinsically unsound in an uprising of class against class, which contradicts all the best instincts of human nature. *Secondly*, that though such uprising may have been prompted by a consideration of the evils and miseries existing in society, there must have been something unsound in the moral character and moral efforts of any one who rushed from love to hate, from self-denial to permission of license, from persuasion to the sword. *Thirdly*, that this unsoundness is traceable to forgetfulness of the doctrine that

man cannot regenerate society by his efforts unassisted from on high. It is true that an Apostle said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," (Phil. iv. 12) and that he acted upon what he said. But he had strength to do so, and owed what success he attained to saying also, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

Joshua Davidson said what is contained in the former of these verses. He did not say what is contained in the latter. He came eventually to a system in which he acknowledged no God but himself—no Christ but himself. Such a system must fail; and this fiction which has been before us, is, without the biographer's intending it, one proof of it.

LECTURE VIII.

Acts vi. 10.

"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake."

I HAVE chosen for the general subject of this, my final, Lecture, a consideration of the difficulties caused by the assertion that the inspired men of Scripture exhibit, in their confessedly authoritative statements, instances of historical inaccuracy and of fallacious logic. This assertion has been made in various forms, and has been applied to various utterances of the kind referred to on the part of those who, whether under the Old Testament or under the New, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But it has been directed with especial vehemence and pertinacity against the speech of St. Stephen, and it seems to have been assumed that the testimony which St. Luke has borne, in the text, to his previous power and honesty, would not be true if applied to that document. Even such a man as Erasmus has ventured to suggest that "it contains many

matters which do not seem to have very much to do with the point which the speaker had really to prove." He qualifies his suggestion, indeed, by the supposition that the speech, as we possess it, is a mere fragment of what would have been said had not the development of the argument been prevented by the clamorous Jews. St. Stephen was certainly interrupted; but, for all that, his topics may be to the purpose, as far as he was suffered to urge them.

But, I have to deal with a more recent objector, who has said two things concerning it:—

First. "That, whereas St. Stephen should, in all fairness, have derived his citations of Scripture from the Hebrew text, he obtained them from some paraphrase or imperfect Targum." This is, in other words, an assertion that he mis-stated historical facts.

Secondly. "That the point really before St. Stephen was a vindication of Christianity—that he ought to have effected this by an appeal to the miracles with which it was alleged to have been accompanied, by bringing into court the persons still living who were reported to have seen Christ alive after His Passion, by justification of his own doctrine from the Law, or by

explanation of the Gospel as superseding the Law; but that he did nothing of the sort." "On the contrary," continues the objector, "he rambled over the familiar histories of the Patriarchs; he showed no connection between ancient dispensations and recent events; and, at length, burst into invectives against the Council, as having transgressed the Law and having resisted the Holy Ghost. On their remonstrating —not unnaturally—at this, he ecstatically declared that the Divine Nature of Christ was miraculously revealed to him." This is, in other words, an insinuation, either that he argued fallaciously, knowing his premises had nothing to do with the conclusion demanded, or, that he wilfully mistook the conclusion to which his arguments should have been directed.

"The speech," says the objector, "has the character of authenticity." It is obvious, therefore, that he believes that it will be more damaging to what he holds to be an incorrect view of Christianity, to allow it to stand as a part of our sacred records, than to expunge it from them. He considers it, in fact, to be an element of the Bible, so intrinsically weak, that an exposure of its defects is sufficient to inflict a severe wound upon that view.

I shall endeavour to-day, to confute those

positions of our objector to which I have alluded. It would be impossible in the time yet remaining to me to take a larger range of discussion. But my examination will, perhaps, show how believers, who have been staggered by similarly bold assertions in reference to other passages, may, by patient examination, re-establish their faith for themselves.

In reference to the first point—the assertion that St. Stephen mis-stated historical facts, I must observe that I cannot attack any premises alleged by our objector in support of it. He has not condescended to give any. I must, therefore, examine the ordinary allegations upon which I suppose his assertion to have been founded. These being removed, as his book gives no evidence that he has any more solid grounds, or has indeed troubled himself to search for any, his assertion must rest simply on his own authority, whatever the value of that may be.

I address myself, however, in the first instance, to the second assertion; which, if it could be substantiated, would be the more damaging of the two, as implying a perverse application of powers, whereas the former implies merely ignorance.

Now, what if it should appear that our

objector has entirely mistaken the point or points to which St. Stephen was bound, under the circumstances, to direct his pleading?

That he has done this, is evidenced by the fact that St. Stephen had to defend, not Christianity, but himself. His previous action, no doubt, was concerned with the promulgation and vindication of Christianity. He had preached it openly in Jerusalem; he had maintained it in disputations with those of the synagogues of the Libertines, the Cyrenians, and the Alexandrians; those of Cilicia, (among them probably Saul or Paul, himself no mean disputant,) and those of pro-consular Asia had felt the vigour of his reasoning. "They were not able," says St. Luke, "to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." How did they then meet him? Why, by setting up a new and irrelevant issue. When they should have confuted his position, that Christianity was to be accepted, by showing cause why it should not be accepted, they raised a cry that he had blasphemed God, blasphemed Moses, blasphemed the Temple. Instead of staying where they were, and patiently re-arguing that other original and relevant issue on the floor of the synagogues, they set up this new and irrelevant issue, and upon it impleaded St. Stephen before

the National Council. St. Stephen had, directly, little to do any longer with the issue which had been thus violently thrust aside. He had to defend himself against the charge of blasphemy in the particular matters alleged. Though it was not the issue which he and his opponents had at first mutually agreed to discuss, not the one which he had himself chosen, not the one which in all fairness he should have been allowed to follow out unmolested, it was that which, as an accused man, he was compelled to take up. And that he did take it up, (so far at least as was compatible with a higher duty,) that he did not fallaciously evade it, but honestly complied with the hard conditions which his menacing adversaries imposed upon him, may be evidenced by that analysis of the contents of his speech, which I now proceed to give you.

"Are these things so?" said the High Priest, as president of what should have been the dispassionate Elderhood of his nation, addressing St. Stephen. "Hast thou, indeed, uttered those blasphemous words of which these men accuse thee?" "These things are not so, men, brethren and fathers," is the tenor of the Holy Deacon's rejoinder, and he straightway applies himself to proving that they are not so.

"*I do not blaspheme God.* Listen to me, and judge whether I do not revere and adore Him. I assert Him to have been the Almighty God, Who called Abraham, Who promised his posterity the land in which ye yourselves now dwell—Who has guided and guarded—Who has chastened or encouraged—that posterity, at every stage of its career, for nearly two thousand years.

"*I do not blaspheme Moses.* Again, listen to me. The writings of Moses are those to which you hear me appeal for the earlier records of your race, and for God's dealings in connection with it. Why do I believe in God's calling of Abraham from Mesopotamia? Why in God's gracious, though apparently discouraging, assurances in reference to Abraham's seed? Why do I hold the divine origin of circumcision, that distinguishing seal of our race? Why are the histories of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, and the other Patriarchs, of the Egyptian bondage, and of Israel's deliverance from it, other than mere legends to me? Why are Moses himself and his chequered career,—why is the burning bush,—why are the wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness forty years—embraced by me as solemn verities, affirmed by me, both here and

elsewhere? It is because, so far from blaspheming Moses, I reverence him as the instrument of giving the law, as the inspired annalist of Israel, as the heaven-accredited leader of my people—nay, more, as the prophet who "rapt into future times," foretold a Prophet like unto himself—yea, that Prophet, Christ, Whom I have been preaching unto you. Do I blaspheme Moses? Nay, I magnify him and his law—the forerunners, and so the preparatives of Christ and the Gospel.

"*And I do not blaspheme the Temple.* David desired to build it. It was the fond dream of his life to construct a habitation for the God of Jacob. Solomon was the builder of it, and to have done so was the glory of Solomon's life. If I say that the Temple, noble as it is, exhibits but a parable or foreshadowing of the Temple not made with hands—of the Temple to which Christianity looks forward and indeed realises—is this to blaspheme it? Nay, is it not to invest it with the very dignity of which Solomon and the prophets spoke, without being supposed thereby to disparage its character and grandeur. Shall what they said, and said without reproach, be accounted blasphemy if repeated by me?"

It is to be observed, however, that St. Stephen has blended with his direct defence an

element of teaching and an element of rebuke. And this he did fairly enough, and, at the same time, consistently with a higher duty than self-defence. He did so, fairly, for the charges of misuse of the topics of God, of Moses, of the Temple, were not fully repelled unless he showed why he brought them on the stage at all. He did so consistently with a higher duty, for though he stood before men as a defendant, he stood before his God as an evangelist. And so he seems to say, "*I speak of God*, because I would have you recollect that He is a God not of the circumcision only, but of the uncircumcision—that He called Abraham before the sign of circumcision was appointed, and that He is, therefore, the Father of all. *They* dishonour Him who limit His fatherhood. *I speak of Moses*, because he pointed most emphatically and distinctly to One Who was to bear an office analogous to his own—to hold the dignity of leader of the world, as Moses held that of a leader of the people. But observe, Moses was called to his position before the Law was given, before the promised land, upon which you find yourselves, was entered. He was, therefore, more than a local prince—he was a type of a Prince of wider range. *They* dishonour him who attribute a finality to his doctrine, and refuse to see

into what it was to be developed. *I speak of the Temple*, because, as Abraham's call was before circumcision—as the mission of Moses was before the Law—so, worship of God was before the Temple, which only localised and brought to a focus the idea of that worship which was bye and bye to pervade every clime, and to attract every heart to the Most High. *They* dishonour the Temple who limit its significancy, and refuse to discover in it an emblem of universal worship of God. If there are any blasphemers in the matters of which I speak—if there are any dishonourers of God, of Moses, and of the Temple, those persons are not myself, but ye."

The evangelist, however, has stept in at various stages of the speech; the man who forgets himself in his desire to improve his hearers; the profound teacher who knows how to apply the lessons of history, if haply those of his own generation may profit by the errors of the past. Hence St. Stephen's allusion to the envy entertained by the Patriarchs towards Joseph—to the misunderstanding of the mission of Moses by him who wronged his brother in Egypt—to the Israelites' rejection of God, and choice of idol-worship in preference to Him,—all of which were foreshadowings of their present rejection of Christ; and hence his final burst of indig-

nation, provoked, as it would seem, by the non-acceptance of what he said by his audience, —"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the Law by the dispensation of angels and have not kept it." (Acts vii. 51—53.)

More, perhaps, he would have said. Perhaps he would have recapitulated his arguments, but he was not permitted to do so. The same temper which had met him in the synagogues, met him here; only intensified by his hearers discovering that they were not merely vanquished in argument, but shown to be morally in the wrong. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth." (Acts vii. 54.) He could do no more with them. From that moment, he turned his eyes from the infuriate multitudes to Him in Whom he trusted, and saw Him, and declared that he saw Him. This irritated them all the more; but the less hope St. Stephen found in man the more he had in

God. "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," are almost his last words. Yet something he said at the moment of dying which showed that the Spirit of Jesus had descended to meet him, and that it was on him and in him, for he cried, after his Master's example, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." When he had said this he fell asleep.

It would be beyond my present design to dwell on the blended majesty and charity of this closing scene. I am most concerned to remind you that so far from not being to the purpose, St. Stephen's speech was very much to the purpose. That it first repelled from himself the charge of blasphemy; and secondly, showed to whom that charge, if it was to attach to any one, should attach more justly; a point which it established at once by argument and by historic example. That he did what he was bound to do, that his process was not fallacious, would seem to be established in no small degree by the result, that his opponents had nothing to say in return—that they silenced the speaker instead of refuting the speech. And if, as I have allowed, St. Stephen combined the teaching and the rebuking element with his defence, the former was part of the defence itself, the latter was in obedience to a higher duty than

that of defence, the duty of preaching Christ. He laboured, after all, not for his own safety, not for his own glory, but for that of Him, Who as He strengthened him to speak and to act, strengthened him also to endure.

And now having, I trust, met adequately the charge of fallaciousness in argument which has been alleged against St. Stephen's speech, I will apply myself to that other charge which has been been brought forward by our objector. It was, you will recollect, a charge of misstating the facts of the Jewish history: "He ought, if he cited the Scriptures at all, to have resorted to the Hebrew text; He has not done so, but has obtained his citations from some paraphrase or imperfect Targum."

That charge divides itself thus:—

First. St. Stephen misquoted the Scriptures, as they really existed.

Secondly. He added to such Scriptures what is not actually read therein.

Thirdly. He derived his misquotations and additions from some paraphrase or imperfect Targum.

I will treat, first, of the third point. Our objector, of course, intends to imply that St. Stephen, in many parts of his speech, appears to cite Scripture rather from the version called

the Septuagint, than from the Hebrew original. Well, granting that this is so, does it necessarily follow that he had not a good reason for doing so, and that he might not have done so, consistently with adherence to the general meaning of the Hebrew? May not his reason have been that he was speaking in Greek, to an audience acquainted with Greek, whether Jews from foreign climes, or Jews dwelling at Jerusalem? And would not these be more attracted by a citation of passages in the very form with which they were familiar, than by a closer citation drawn immediately from the original? It does not seem to have been a custom, even with Christ Himself or any of His followers, to cite invariably the *ipsissima verba* of the Old Testament. It was enough for their purpose to give the general meaning, or to make an allusion. The Septuagint version presented a convenient instrument for doing so, and they very often adopted it; and yet it may be shown that they kept the Hebrew meaning substantially in view. This I endeavoured to prove, as you will recollect, in the Seventh and Eighth Lectures of my Second Series. I there gave seven Canons, by which the form of quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament may be accounted for; and I also exemplified the appli-

cation of these Canons by various examples treated of at length. I need not repeat here what was treated of, so fully, there; but I may remind you of three things:—

First,—That I acknowledged that there were some, though a very few, passages out of the 213 cited from the Old Testament in the New Testament, for which the Canons will not satisfactorily account. Zechariah xi. 12, 13, and Psalm xl. 7 were instances. (Compare Matthew xxvii. 9, 10, and Hebrews x. 5.)

Secondly,—That one cause of this may have been a very early alteration of the text of the New Testament by well-intentioned but unlearned persons, in order to bring it into accordance with the only Old Testament with which they were acquainted, *viz.*, that of the Septuagint. (Very few of the Fathers—Origen and Jerome being exceptions—had knowledge of Hebrew.) I paralleled this alteration by the fact that many of the corrections of the Vatican text of the Septuagint which are found in the Alexandrine, which was somewhat later, were dictated by an anxiety to reconcile the Old Testament Greek to that of the New Testament.

Thirdly,—That if one allows that difficulties almost inexplicable may be found in the text of a profane author, without supposing that the

passages in which they occur were penned by him in the exact form in which they now appear, we may allow this in the text of sacred documents. Both one and the other may have suffered from the carelessness of copyists or the ignorant zeal of correctors and editors.

But now we come to the other allegations. It is said that St. Stephen misquoted the Scriptures as they really existed.

And, that he added to such Scriptures what is not actually found therein.

Some ten places in the speech have been brought forward in support of one or other of these allegations. I will examine them separately.

(1.) In Acts vii. 2, St. Stephen is said to have spoken of an appearance of God to Abraham in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran or Haran. This is alleged to be an addition to what is recorded in Genesis xi. 31, where it is simply stated that Terah took Abraham and the rest of his family to Haran from Ur of the Chaldees,—not the slightest intimation being given that a call from God had anything to do with the matter. A reply is at once ready. It does not at all appear that St. Stephen had Genesis xi. 31 solely in his mind. Another passage, Genesis xii. 1, has the words, "Now the Lord had said

to Abram." Said when? Obviously, if we read these words in connection with other passages, when he was in Mesopotamia, or Ur of the Chaldees. So it is at least probable that obedience to a Divine command had produced the first movement westward of Terah and his family. The Hebrew word is indeed in the past tense—"Now God said"—but that language had no means of making the nice distinction conveyed by the pluperfect, as opposed to the mere past. Still, the past included the other, and our translators have rightly given, "Now, the Lord had said to Abram." Besides, the probability of which I spoke of their interpretation being correct is rendered a certainty by three other passages, which were doubtless before them as well as the speech of St. Stephen. God says Himself, in Genesis xv. 7, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land;" and in Joshua xxiv. 3, "I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood." And Nehemiah (ix. 7) thus addresses his Maker, "Thou art the God Which didst choose Abraham, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees." So much for this objection. A careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture evinces it to be utterly baseless.

(2.) In Acts vii. 4, it is said that Abraham moved from Haran into Canaan after the death of his father. It appears in Genesis xi. 26, that Terah was 70 years old when Abraham was born, and in Genesis xii. 4, that Abraham was 75 years old when his migration into Canaan took place. These two numbers together make Terah only 145 years old at his death, but it is said in Genesis xi. 32, that he died aged 205 years.

Again, a reply is ready to this very small cavil. There is nothing in Genesis to raise the presumption that Abraham was the eldest son of Terah, except the fact that he is mentioned first, which was probably due to the circumstance that the main interest of the history was to cluster around him. All that appears is, that Terah was 70 years old before he had any children at all; for ought we know 60 years may have elapsed between the birth of his eldest and his youngest child, and Abraham may have been the youngest. Surely something like positive demonstration should have been adduced before a man like St. Stephen is accused of falsifying chronology; and, though there is no need of resorting to such a supposition in this case, the uncertainty of numbers in the text of the Old Testament is so great, that, even on this

ground, a discrepancy of this kind cannot be—even if it could be substantiated—considered of great importance.

(3.) In Acts vii., 6, 7, it is said that God declared that "Abraham's seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God; and after that shall they come forth, and serve Me in this place."

On this it is urged, that the Israelites, Abraham's seed, were in Egypt 430 years, as appears from Exodus xii. 40, (compared with Gal. iii. 17); and, though it may be shown, from various considerations, that only half of this time (*viz.*, 215), was actually spent in Egypt, the 430 being calculated from Abraham going thither himself—yet, not to press this, St. Stephen is wrong by at least 30 years.

Again, a reply is ready—St. Stephen is, of course, speaking in round numbers, and instances of this method are scattered abundantly over the surface of Holy Scripture; and as for the minor objection, insinuated, but not pressed, not Egypt only, but even Canaan, in which God did not give to Abraham land to set his foot on, was a strange land, a place of so-

journing, to the chosen people, until they eventually came out of Egypt.

(4.) In Acts vii. 7, it is said that God declared that, after the Israelites came out of Egypt, "they should serve Him in this place," *viz.*, in Canaan, where the words came to Abraham. Now, in Gen. xv. 13, 14, we read simply, "They shall come out with great substance." St. Stephen, therefore, has altered the words of God.

Again a reply is ready—St. Stephen is simply combining (as I showed in Lectures Seven and Eight, Second Series, to be frequently the usage of Holy Scripture,) two prophecies together. *This place* refers not to Canaan, but to Horeb, and the prophecy to Abraham has been combined with another prophecy to Moses, which exhibits this more clearly. It is to be found in Exodus iii. 11, 12. "And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." This, then, is simply another evidence that objectors should compare one place of Scripture with another, before committing themselves to an objection.

(5.) In Acts vii. 9, St. Stephen asserts that the Patriarchs sold Joseph into Egypt. This is alleged to be incompatible with the statement in Genesis xxxvii. 28, that they sold him to the Midianites, who, and not the Patriarchs themselves, brought him into Egypt and sold him.

This admits of a very simple reply. It appears from Genesis xxxvii. 25, that the Patriarchs sold him to a caravan of merchants, who were obviously, from the direction in which they were travelling, and from the spicery and balm and myrrh with which their camels were loaded, going into Egypt. Besides, what are Joseph's own words in the matter on the affecting occasion of his making himself known to his brethen in Genesis xlv. 3, 4. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." This cavil at St. Stephen's accuracy, is not merely infinitesimally minute, but contemptible.

(6.) In Acts vii. 14 it is said that St. Stephen, by using the words, "Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his

kindred, threescore and fifteen souls," has contradicted the statements made in the Hebrew text of Genesis xlvi. 26, 27. This is, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; and the sons of Joseph which were born to him in Egypt were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten." This latter sum is, of course, made up by adding Jacob, Joseph, himself, and his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to the former sum. But St. Stephen has evidently quoted the number given in the Septuagint, in utter forgetfulness of the Hebrew.

There is not very much, I think, in this objection. It is true that the Septuagint has "All the souls which came with Jacob into Egypt, those which were born to him, were seventy-five," but then, in the next verse (27) there is an interpolated passage which makes the number of Joseph's children nine instead of two, or instead of seven—if another interpolated passage, which includes five of his grandsons or great-grandsons, is admissible. But as these five appear in Numbers xxvi. 28—37, and in 1 Chronicles vii. 14—20, we need not suppose the Septuagint version of Genesis

to have been exclusively referred to. The sum of seventy-five, which includes them, is quite as correct as that of seventy, which, besides including Jacob, includes Joseph and his two sons who were in Egypt already. I will merely add, that if this is not perfectly satisfactory, we have still the resource of supposing that a correction has been made in the text of the Acts, with a view to bringing it into exact accordance with the Septuagint, the only Bible with which the Fathers in general were acquainted.

(7). It is said in Acts vii. 15, 16, "So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem." This statement is alleged to be utterly discordant with what is said in the Old Testament, and, at the least, to add something to what is recorded there.

(1.) Jacob, it is said, was not buried at Sychem (or Shechem) but at Machpelah, a totally different place, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah were buried.

(2.) The Old Testament does not say where the Patriarchs were buried.

(3.) The purchase of land at Sychem (or

Shechem) was not made by Abraham, who purchased some land at Machpelah of Ephron the Hittite, but by Jacob, who negotiated it with the sons of Emmor (or Hamor) the father of Shechem.

Such are the difficulties connected with these two verses, I cannot and would not conceal from you that they are at first sight considerable. I may not be able to explain them thoroughly, but they may be removed to some extent.

One of the difficulties may, I think, be summarily disposed of. St. Stephen does not assert that Jacob was buried at Sychem (or Shechem) but that the Patriarchs were. There is, then, nothing in his assertion to contradict what the Old Testament says (Gen. l. 13), that he was buried at Machpelah.

As for the Patriarchs, the body of Joseph, who died in Egypt, was put into a coffin there, taken by the Israelites with them when they quitted Egypt (Genesis l. 26), and eventually buried at Shechem. With one exception, the record of this is in remarkable correspondence with the words of St. Stephen: "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred

pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." (Joshua xxiv. 32.) For the rest of the Patriarchs, it is more than probable that the tribes named after them paid a similar mark of respect to the remains of their ancestors. And though no record of this is found elsewhere in Scripture, we may surely believe on the authority of St. Stephen that it was the case. The murder of Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the names of the magicians who withstood Moses, the attribution of the great drought in Ahab's days to Elijah's prayer, are not found in the Old Testament, but they are believed on the authority of our Lord and of His Apostles. Why not the burial of the Patriarchs in Sychem on that of St. Stephen? It may be mentioned, for what it is worth, that St. Jerome, who was well acquainted with Palestine and its traditions, speaks of Paula as having visited the graves of the twelve Patriarchs at Sychem; and that Josephus (Antiq. ii. 8, 2) though he says they were buried in Hebron, and was thus mistaken as to the exact locality, is an evidence of a belief that their bodies were brought into the Promised Land. There are also Rabbinical traditions, quoted by Wetstein and Lightfoot, which report them to have been buried at Sychem.

Supposing, however, these preliminary difficulties to be disposed of, there yet remains this, the attribution of the purchase of Sychem to Abraham, instead of to Jacob. The Old Testament record is so distinct, that one cannot suppose it possible that St. Stephen, even if he had no supernatural guidance on the subject, could have confounded the two purchases. And we find Jacob expressly desiring to be interred, not in any ground purchased by himself, but in ground purchased by Abraham, and consecrated by many tender recollections. Hear his own words, and those by which they are introduced and followed: "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers, in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the

field, and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." (Genesis xlix. 28—33.) Under these circumstances, I am induced to believe that the word Abraham is an interpolation in the sacred text, and that the word *bought* and what follows it, are to be referred to Jacob, of whom, and not of Abraham, St. Stephen is speaking in this particular part of his address. I grant, indeed, that no manuscript omits the word, and that resort to omission is an *ultima ratio;* but great names as those of Beza, Valcknaer, Kuinoel, and others are in favour of this amendment. And, it may be added, the reference of a verb to a rather remote subject or nominative case, as it is very common in Hebrew, so it is not uncommon in Hellenistic writers. The passage will now run:

"So Jacob died, he and our fathers, and they (our fathers) were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre which he bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem."

If this expedient is not admitted, I have no other to offer; but I would admit anything

rather than impugn the accuracy of St. Stephen, (which we have hitherto found unassailable, and shall find further unassailable,) because of one hard passage in it.

(8.) In Acts vii. 22, 23, it is said that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and that, "when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." The learning of Moses, and the age at which he first visited his own people, are, it is alleged, additions to the Old Testament record.

I reply, be it so. But St. Stephen's authority, as I have observed already, may be adequate for an interpretation, or even an addition to the words of the Old Testament, "when Moses was grown." And we may also take it for certain that he was correct in stating that one who was brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh as her own son had all the advantages of education which the royal family of the most learned nation of the world could obtain.

We need trouble ourselves no more with these points.

(9.) In Acts vii. 29, it is said that Moses fled from Egypt at the saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me,

as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?" This is said to be opposed to the Old Testament narrative, which attributes his flight to fear of the King of Egypt. "And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh." (Exodus ii. 14, 15.)

I reply, to condense is surely not to oppose. Of course, Moses fled at the word, because it and the transaction which called it forth were reported to Pharaoh.

(10.) In Acts vii. 42, 43, occur the following words:—"Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven: as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to Me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon." The quotation contained in it would seem to be taken from the Book of Amos (v. 25, 27), but the form in which it occurs there is somewhat different from the version of St. Stephen: "Have ye offered unto

Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, Whose name is the God of hosts." It would seem at first sight that St. Stephen has strangely altered the prophet's words. For, not to press minor variations, Babylon is substituted by him for Damascus, and the name of the deity Chiun is altered into Remphan.

In reference to the former of these objections, I reply as I replied in the Seventh and Eighth Lectures of the Second Series, that the enlargement of a prophecy, by connecting it with other prophecies, in quotation, is very usual in Scripture, and that no contradiction ensues from the present enlargement. It remained perfectly true, as a fulfilment of the prophecy, that the Israelites were carried away beyond Damascus, though Babylon, eastward of that place, and even the further east, became the exact scene of their captivity. "I will give all Judah into the hand of the King of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword," are the words of God

by Jeremiah (xx. 4, 5.) No doubt St. Stephen combined this prophecy and its fulfiment with the words of Amos which he was immediately quoting. No doubt also, this, his combination, brought to the memories of his audience the pathetic words of the Psalmist, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion."

As for the substitution of Remphan for Chiun, it is true that this is found in the Septuagint, with various readings, such as Raiphan, Rephan, or Rompha. No perfectly satisfac-factory account can be assigned for the discrepancy. It may be that the Hebrew text has been corrupted, or that the Septuagint word is a synonym for the Hebrew word.* But, even if the discrepancy is, with our present knowledge, inexplicable, it must be recollected that no point of doctrine is affected by its being so, and that it would be a very narrow and microscopic criticism to condemn St. Stephen of historical inaccuracy for so small a matter as this.

Be this, however, as it may, enough evidence has been adduced, I hope, to show that St.

* *Chiun* is said to be the name of the planet Saturn, and it is tolerably certain that Saturn was called by the Egyptians *Raiphan*. The two names would, therefore, be equivalent.

Stephen, as he could not be fairly charged with fallacious logic in his speech, is not, if his references to the Old Testament are carefully examined, chargeable with historical inaccuracy.

If St. Stephen's speech, then, which has been specially attacked by objectors to the Bible, admits of a vindication which is, under the circumstances, so complete, this is surely a strong ground for presuming that other confessedly authoritative statements made by inspired men in Scripture, are susceptible of similar vindication.

Let me say, however, one word in conclusion, to explain why I am especially anxious to assert the historical accuracy of the Bible.

There are of course some things in the Bible upon which, by almost universal consent, such absolute exactness as will at once commend itself to the scientific, or the philological mind, is not to be demanded. Men do not expect *now*, whatever was the case in former days, that allusions to subjects involving astronomical or geological facts, and to matters of natural history, should be expressed in other terms than can be at once understood by the mere ordinary observer. It is felt, and felt rightly, that the Bible is written for all,—not merely for the man of science. It is acknowledged that even the

man of science does not, in his ordinary conversation, employ circumlocutions unintelligible to the multitude when speaking of natural phenomena, but describes them in a popular manner. And further, and at the root of all this, it is acknowledged that, if the Bible had anticipated scientific discovery, many faculties of man would have been useless, and that, if it had spoken scientifically of natural things in a day when science was in its infancy, its language would have been unappreciated by those to whom its several books were originally addressed.

So again, of philological matters. It is confessed that, from whatever cause, difficulties exist as to numbers in the Bible which cannot be satisfactorily explained: they may be attributable to those numbers having been originally expressed by letters used as figures; those letters may have become confused with similar letters, thus making a fresh combination; and the corrupted combination may afterwards have been expressed in words, so as to preclude the possibility of tracing the source of the error. Proper names also of men and places exhibit considerable variety, attributable, no doubt, either to the carelessness of copyists, or to injuries done to manuscripts, such as, unless we

suppose the integrity of the inspired documents to have been guaranteed by a perpetual miracle, might be expected during the progress of ages. It is possible, also, that portions of the Books of the Bible may have become displaced, and that thus want of sequence may occasionally be discovered.

Well, with such scientific inaccuracies, and with such philological questions, we are not greatly troubled. The latter were to have been anticipated in any document which, though Divine in its origin, has been entrusted to human keeping; the former deceive no one, and it is a thing absolutely indifferent to man's salvation, whether the appearance of day upon the earth, or the movements of the lips of the hare, are described as they are in themselves, or simply as they present themselves to the cursory observation of mankind.

Here, however, so it seems to me, our admission of anything like inaccuracy must cease. A mis-statement in God's Word as to historical facts involves a mis-statement as to man, whose condition Revelation and its provisions are intended to remedy. And if man's history is not stated correctly, if varying and contradictory accounts are given of it, a doubt is necessarily thrown, not merely upon the justice

of the Divine displeasure at man's doings, but upon the necessity of the scheme which is represented as remedial of the effects of man's doings. I am willing, indeed, to allow that trivial features of difference in a narrative may exist without any disadvantage to Scripture. I candidly admit that these are to be expected, unless inspiration reduces the inspired man to a mere machine. But I would insist upon the maintenance of the grand principle, that Scripture and the inspired men of Scripture, are, in their confessedly authoritative statements, exempt from error. I would urge upon all, as a grand duty, not to acquiesce without careful examination, in any assertion as to particular passages, which appears at first sight to contravene this principle. And I would also say, even if one or two, or perhaps more passages cannot at once be reconciled to it, the vast amount of ascertained accuracy must, in all fairness, be taken into consideration.

But, I must now bid you farewell. My three years' tenure of office has expired, and my treatment, before you, of "Moral Difficulties connected with the Bible" must cease. I do not profess to have exhausted my subject. I must say of my humble treatment of it, what Carlyle says was remarked of a much more ambitious

performance, "it is like a bas-relief sculpture, it does not conclude, it merely ceases." This apology is the more necessary because, with certain exceptions,* the Lectures of the Three Series are rather monographs than parts of a continuous dissertation. To some, perhaps, this may seem a disadvantage, but there are those who will be attracted by detached lectures who would be repelled by a connected disquisition.

I thank you for your unwearying attention, and trust that the important topics which have come under discussion have not suffered in my hands. For the rest, may the God of Truth mercifully accept and bless what I have endeavoured to say in defence of His Truth and of the Bible, in which it is enshrined!

AMEN.

* The two Lectures on "The Psalms," for instance, and also the two Lectures on "The Septuagint," and the four Lectures on "Prayer."

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